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The church in earnest

THE

CHURCH IN EARNEST.

BY

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PREFACE.

LAST year I ventured to publish a little work, entitled, 'An Earnest Ministry the Want of the Times.' Most of the Reviews which did me the honor of criticising it characterized and recommended it as a *practical* work. Whether this were intended in the way of depreciation or information, it most aptly describes the production, which contains no profound disquisition — no new views — no development of abstract principles, and which pretends to nothing more than a humble effort, made in love, to stir up the pure minds of my brethren, by way of remembrance, and to furnish a few practical directions to beginners in the ministry.

Every one who writes to do good, and who yields to the impulse which says to him, "Do something; do it;" should well consider, not only what he *would* do, but what he *can* do; should study, not only his obligations, but his talents, his opportunities, and his means. It was a wise plan of action which the Psalmist laid down for himself, when he said, "Neither do I exercise myself in things too high for me." On this rule I have uniformly endeavored to act, in all my attempts at authorship. If I have any talent for usefulness, it is essentially a practical one. I will not conceal that I have been sometimes almost tempted to envy those who possess greater power of abstract thinking. This is a noble faculty, and the men to whom it is given perform services for truth which are invaluable, and, indeed, indispensable; they explain its nature — unfold its beauty — defend it against the attacks of error — and establish principles to be applied by those who could neither so clearly discover, nor so ably sustain them. Practical men, however, are as useful in their place as ingenious and contemplative ones; and if their department be a more humble, yet it is not a less necessary, one, than that of theorists, philosophers, and logicians. There must be the hands to work the engine, as well as the mind to invent it.

In the exercise of this my vocation, I now send forth another work, no less practical than the one which immediately preceded it, or than several others, the products of my pen. The publication of the volume on "An Earnest Ministry," brought to me many and urgent applications for a similar one, addressed to the Churches. When I considered these appeals, I foresaw, what I have since experienced, the difficulty of keeping clear, in this work, of some of the topics involved in the subject of its predecessor. That difficulty I have not been able altogether to avoid. The earnestness of the ministry, and the earnestness of the people, in reference to the same great object, are, on so many points, coincident, that it was neither possible, if it had been desirable, nor desirable, had it been possible, to avoid the repetition of some views and counsels common to both. Yet, even after this explanation, I anticipate a complaint that several portions of this work are but a republication of some portions of the other. I cannot altogether deny the charge, and can only observe, in addition to what has been already just stated, that as the volumes are intended for two different classes of persons, comparatively few will read both; and that, though in some places the same topics are taken up, the discussion and the illustrations are considerably varied.

To the publication of this work I have been stimulated by an able critique in the "British Quarterly Review," for February last, entitled, "The Christian Ministry, and how to mend it." In that essay occurs the following remark, "We confess, however, that we have been prompted, in great part, to the writing of this paper, by a fear, lest, while the responsibilities of the pulpit are discussed, those of the pew should be forgotten; for assuredly while an earnest ministry may conduce to an earnest church, it is only as we possess both, we shall possess an earnest and powerful Christianity."

To the wisdom, truth, and importance of this momentous paragraph, I most heartily subscribe, and in the hope of promoting the union and harmony which it recommends, have addressed this volume to the occupant of the pew, as I did the former to the occupant of the pulpit. Earnestness is equally the duty of both, and so close is the sympathy between them, that it is almost impossible for the one to be, or to continue long, in a state of full devotedness, if the other be not in a similar condition. Even the seraphic ardor of a minister who is as a flame of fire, will soon be in danger

of cooling down to the lukewarmness of the flock, if his efforts are unsuccessful in raising their spiritual temperature to his own.

It is more than probable that some persons will be of opinion that I underestimate the piety of the present generation of professors, and the *spiritual* condition of the church—that I have written in too desponding a tone—and that in adverting to defects and imperfections, I have not done justice to acknowledged excellences. In reply, I observe, that my object is not so much to compare the piety of the age with that of any antecedent one, which is an extremely difficult attempt, as with the standard set up in the Word of God, for all times, and for all states of society. I have followed, what appears to me to be, the precedents of our Lord's addresses to the seven churches in Asia, and the apostolical epistles to the primitive churches; in which, while the good is acknowledged and commended, the evil also, is disclosed and condemned. How much of complaint, expostulation, and reproof, do we find in these solemn and faithful appeals to the churches of those days! A weak and foolish love, which sees no fault in the object of its blind affection, deals only in flattery and caresses; while a judicious regard, which is jealous for the honor of *its* object, and wishes to advance it to perfection, is in danger of being too impatient under a sense of its defects.

Some of my readers will also accuse me of magnifying the dangers to which the evangelical system is likely to be exposed in this and the coming age, from popery, infidelity, and false philosophy. In this I have acted upon the truth of the proverb, that "to be forewarned is to be forearmed." The man who, in such an age as this, folds his arms, closes his eyes, falls back in his chair, and lulls himself to sleep, with the easy consciousness that there is no need of alarm, vigilance, and caution, must have powers of observation, or methods of calculation, very different from mine. Recent events, I know, it is said, are most inauspicious for popery. Be it so: but do we imagine that it is dead? Have we forgotten how it recovered from a deeper, and seemingly more deadly wound, inflicted upon it by the first revolution of France? Moreover, is it lost sight of, that though it should be destroyed as a temporal power, and should be left by all secular governments to take care of itself, its spiritual potency to fascinate and to seduce men still remains? Consider-

ing what has occurred, and is still going on, in this land of liberty, science, philosophy, and commerce, shall we smile at the fears of those who dread an increase of this pernicious system? As regards infidelity and false philosophy, that man must be a recluse, and know nothing of the progress of events, who is ignorant of the rapid advance which these foes of the Bible are making in society. Let the statements which will be found in the following pages be attentively considered, and then say if they who keep watch and ward on the towers of Zion ought not to sound the alarm of an approaching foe?

Danger? Of what? Not indeed of the downfall of either Christianity or Protestantism. What believer in the truth of revelation, or what follower of the doctrines of the Reformation, has a moment's solicitude on that point? I, for one, feel not a single trepidation for the safety of either of these. I have no doubt of the final, complete, and glorious triumph of truth over error, and good over evil. Notwithstanding the vicissitudes of human affairs, and some of them disastrous ones too, I am a firm believer in the onward course of events. The way of Providence does not resemble one of our modern railways, but is more like a noble river, which is ever winding in its channel, and which, though, amidst its many convolutions, it seems sometimes rolling back upon its source, is ever flowing towards the ocean. In such an age as this, when it would look as if a destroying angel were passing over the despotisms of all Europe, and making way for the sudden, unexpected, and universal reign of liberty, to doubt which way the current is flowing, betrays a deplorable ignorance of the tendencies of events, and of the designs of the great Ruler of the nations. But are liberty and religion identical? Are the downfall of tyranny and of infidelity sure to be contemporaneous? Will a false and seductive philosophy necessarily and immediately wither in the light and air of freedom?

It is to be recollected that there can be no perfect freedom of conscience, while there is a single fetter left upon the expression of religious opinion. The utterance of a man's thoughts must no more be stopped by the stern interdict of the law, than the utterance of his breath. If the next moment we could destroy, by the power of the sword, all the infidel books in existence, we ought not to do it. Christianity gains no honor by any triumph, nor, in the long run,

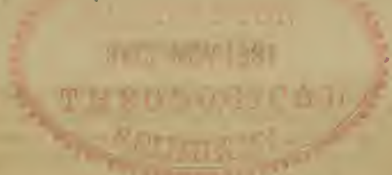
any power, but what she fairly wins by argument, and the blessing of Almighty God. And will her enemies be slow to avail themselves of the new liberty which they are now to have throughout Europe, for assailing her? On the contrary, their troops will be reinforced, and with new courage they will advance to the attack. What then? Has Christianity anything to fear? Nothing, for her stability and final triumph. Founded on a rock, the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. But, then, how does she gain her victories? Not certainly by an ignorance, a denial, or a contempt, of the strength of her foes, for they are many and mighty. Not by a careless security. Not by commanding silence to the warders on the keep, or ridiculing and rebuking their alarms, when they see the foe advancing. No; but by sounding the trumpet, calling upon the sacramental hosts to consider the resources of the enemy, bidding them arm for the conflict, and summoning them to her uplifted standard. Besides, who would not wish that the final victory of truth should be won, with as little loss as possible to those who are its professed followers? Who would not desire to prevent even the partial and temporary victories of error? And we know that many an army destined to ultimate defeat, has, for a while, been successful, and inflicted much injury upon the troops by which it was to be in the end subdued and routed. In this view of matters, I believe the caution of the timid, when it does not amount to panic, may be of some use, in the way of directing the courage of the brave. Such is my defence against those who might accuse me of magnifying the danger to which evangelical religion is in this day exposed from its triple foe. With the calm and assured confidence of its final, complete, and universal triumph, I combine what I consider a well-founded dread of its present and partial discomfiture; and in my bright and joyful anticipations of the former, will not forget to guard against the latter.

J. A. J.

EDGBASTON,
April 7th, 1848.

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THE CHURCH IN EARNEST.

CHAPTER I.

THE DESIGNS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE CHURCH AS REGARDS THE PRESENT WORLD.

How much of history, as well as of religion; how much that is momentous to man as a pilgrim to immortality, as well as interesting to him as a sojourner upon earth, is associated with that most familiar, yet most significant word, **THE CHURCH**: what moral power, what high destiny, what divine operations and exalted purposes, are comprehended within its legitimate meaning! Yet no term has been more misunderstood, none more abused. What mistakes have been made about it; what controversies has it occasioned; what usurpation, and tyranny, and bloodshed, has it been made to sanction! and yet, if men would drop their prejudices, and study the subject in that only volume which can decide every question relating to it and involved in it, how easily would it be understood, and how simply and correctly might it be stated!

The church, according to Scripture testimony, was a phrase in use before either Rome or England was known in connection with Christianity; and must mean something which would have existed had these places never received the gospel; and which would still exist, if they were the next hour sunk to the bottom of the ocean. To appropriate this appellation, therefore, to either of the ecclesiastical organizations bearing these names, and to call the Romish or the English communions "*The church,*" is as great an impropriety as it would be to apply it to designate the Methodist, the Independent, or the Baptist

body There is a wider signification of the term, which enters into all systems of polity, gathering out of them those who "through grace have believed," and contemplating them apart from their sectional distinctions, associates them together by no other bond than the "like precious faith," and views them as possessing the common salvation — there is "*The church.*"

It is in this sense the word is to be understood in this volume: as meaning that part of the mighty aggregate of God's redeemed people, who are still on earth, "working out their salvation with fear and trembling," and who are "the pillar and ground of truth." Beneath the thin covering of denominational distinctions, there, in all the true believers in Christ which they contain, lies the true church. These sects comprise the reality, contain the divine idea, but they are not identical with it. The fundamental creed of the true church is held by them all alike: and that faith which is essential to the church's existence is also in them all alike. There is much in each that is not of the church, and there is much in each that is. The true link of membership and union is nothing sacerdotal, or ceremonial, or political, but something moral and spiritual. Other things may be necessary to regulate the social relations of the various bodies of its professed members, and to direct their intercourse and operations — hence forms of polity and ceremonial observances — but *the church* itself consists of all "who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

What a community! A something divine amidst what is human — a heavenly citizenship on earth — an eternal production of Omnipotent love, surrounded by the ever perishing vanities of what is seen and temporal.

Such is *the church*, — a kingdom, not of this world, chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and set up to be to the praise of his glory, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," as "an habitation of God through the Spirit." None but God himself can adequately understand, much less fully comprehend, the vast importance, the intrinsic worth, the real glory, of this community: divested of all

those foreign, impure, and disfiguring accretions which ignorance and superstition, fraud and ambition, have gathered around it, it is a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty in the hand of our God. How has this venerable and sacred name been abused and prostituted to sanction the principles, and abet the designs, of ecclesiastical tyranny ; to inflame the darkest passions and perpetrate the foulest deeds ; to subvert the liberties of mankind, and arrest the progress of social improvement ; till "the church" has become the reproach of religion, the scoff of infidelity, and the deepest blot of history ! But this is *not* the church, and the organizations which have called themselves such have but usurped an honor which does not belong to them.

It is quite time for all professing Christians to begin to think more of *the* church, as recognized by its divine Head, and less of *their* church, as limited by their peculiarities. They can never answer the end and purpose for which this community is set up in the world, till they better understand its nature. As long as they lose what is universal in what is partial ; what is catholic in what is denominational ; what is essential in what is circumstantial—in short, as long as forms of polity, however important in their place, rather than fundamental truths, constitute, in their view, the basis of the church, the grand designs of God in reference to his kingdom upon earth cannot be fully carried out, and the end of its existence must be in some measure lost.

What, then, is the design which God intends the church to accomplish in this world, and with relation *to* the world ?

There is a *subjective* design which refers to itself,—this is obviously its own salvation. God, in the exuberance of his love, and in the riches of his mercy, has determined to save, through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, all those who repent and believe. These he will redeem by the blood of the cross, and the grace of the Spirit, from the guilt, power, and love of sin, from death and hell, and bring into a state of favor and holiness here, and to the felicities and honors of heaven hereafter : and

all this to the praise of the glory of his own grace, wisdom, truth and justice.

But we now speak of the *objective* purpose of the church, so far as this purpose applies to our world. This is two-fold—it is designed to be a WITNESSING and a PROSELYTING church—to be, in other words, the depository and the herald of truth.

The first part of its mission is to receive the truth, and bear testimony for God in, and to, our world. The universe is full of witnesses for its divine Creator. “There is one important respect in which all its objects, from the atom to the arch-angel, unite—all are witnesses for God.” “The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth forth his handy-work.” Everything on our earth, by silent yet expressive testimony, speaks of God, and for him. Science, the great prophet and expounder of nature, and all her sons, bear constant, though in some instances reluctant, testimony for him who created all things by his power. Chemistry bears witness to his wisdom, astronomy to his immensity, and geology to his eternity. On every leaf, on every blade, and every pebble, He has written his name and impressed his character, so that while the solitary voice and gloomy lie of the atheist are saying there is no God, the million voices around contradict him, and even the pulses of his own heart, and every atom of that organ, contradict him and say, “There is, and He is thy Maker.”

But there are other witnesses for God, who give forth a fuller and more impressive testimony than the material universe, viewed as a whole, or contemplated in its separate parts. To the question, “What is God as to his moral character, and his disposition towards the sinful inhabitants of our globe,” this oracle is dumb: to the inquiry, “How shall man be just with God,” no response is given forth. The sun with all his glory, the moon with all her beauty, and the earth with all its various contents, deliver no testimony of mercy for fallen, guilty man. For this high purpose is the church raised up; this is her momentous vocation, her solemn duty, her blessed privilege. “She is first a focus in which all light

from heaven should meet, and all the sanctified excellence of heart be collected and combined ; that it might next be a centre whence the light of truth might radiate and pour forth in all directions over the face of the earth."

First of all, there is the divine Head of the church himself. Of him it was predicted, "He shall be for a witness to the people." He claimed this prerogative ; he asserted this to be his mission, when standing at the bar of Pilate. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." The same mission is claimed for him by the beloved apostle, where he calls him "the faithful and true witness." He is personally the true tabernacle of witness, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He came from the bosom of the Father to reveal the nature, plans, purposes, and the work of God. He is "*the Word*," the great prophet, the "true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." In the mysterious constitution of his person, and in the accomplishment of his mediatorial work by his death, resurrection and intercession, he stands before the universe as an embodiment of truth. The mingled glories of the divine nature, and the full revelation of the divine plans, stream forth from his cross, as a comprehensive and sublime testimony to all that is necessary for man to know and believe in order to salvation.

Next to him, comes the goodly company of the apostles, to repeat in echo the testimony of Christ ; and not only by their living voice, but by their inspired and immortal writings, to send to the uttermost ends of the earth, and down to the latest posterity, the witness of the Son of God.

But neither the Lord Jesus, nor his apostles, are the church, and it is the whole church to whom God says, "Ye are my witnesses." It is the whole body of the faithful, "the general assembly and church of the first-born," to whom this momentous commission is intrusted, on whom this solemn duty is devolved. We must ever think of the truths to which the witness of the church is to be borne. The unity, spirituality, attributes, and

works of the Eternal Father — the divinity and mediation of Christ — the personality, divinity, and operations of the Spirit — the doctrines of regeneration and justification — the greatness and attainableness of salvation — the necessity of holy obedience — the reality and glory of eternal life for the righteous — and the certainty of eternal death for the wicked. Such is in substance the truth to which the company of the redeemed are to depose before a dark and wicked world. Such are the verities in support of which the voice of the church is to be lifted up on our earth. Viewing man as a moral agent, a sinful creature, a ruined immortal, what to him are all the facts and wonders of science, compared with these things, but as the trifle of a moment, the small dust of the balance?

Such is the vocation of every single Christian, however young, or poor, or uneducated, to hold up these realities before the minds of men, and attest their divine truth, their power, and excellence. Hence the descriptions given by the apostle of the design and business of the church, where he calls her, *the pillar and ground of the truth*. Not that the church either originates or accredits the truth, — not that it constitutes the obligation of obeying it, or infallibly and authoritatively expounds its meaning, — but that it is merely the depository of it for the world, and holds it up to be seen and known upon the earth. She is the Pharos of the moral world, the lighthouse of this dark region, exhibiting to public notice, and for general observation, all those subjects which stand connected with man's highest obligations, dearest interests, and immortal hopes. This high vocation, this holy mission, she is to fulfil by sustaining the Christian ministry; by keeping safely her creeds, catechisms, and other formularies; by looking well to the education of her children; by taking care for the instruction of her members in Christian doctrine and duty; by holding fast the form of sound words, and attaching importance to right sentiments; by giving encouragement to orthodox literature; by "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" in short, by every way in which an

intelligent and firm yet catholic spirited and tolerant zeal for truth can be maintained and diffused. Every Christian man and woman must consider that it is by the truth the world is to be converted to Christ, and all the purposes of divine grace fulfilled, and that they are called to be the conservators of that truth. "He that believeth hath the witness [or testimony] in himself." He has it as a sacred deposit laid up in his mind, to be ever carried about with him wherever he goes, and is to watch it with the same care as he would if he were individually the last light of the world, and the only remaining witness for God upon the face of the earth.

How high and honorable a vocation ! but withal how awful and responsible its duty — to bear witness for God ! To be called to the work of perpetually bearing testimony, before an ignorant and careless world, on such topics ! To lift up, amidst the din of politics, the bustle of commerce, the pretensions of science, and the shouts of folly, a voice which shall remind the busy and eager throng, that there are other and more important matters than these, which deserve and demand their attention ! To exhibit truths that relate to another world, and which appeal exclusively to faith, to the men who are wholly absorbed in objects of sense ! To obtrude the solemn verities of heaven, hell, and eternity, upon the attention of those who mind earthly things ! To add the living voice, the acting power of a truthful and consistent example, to the silent testimony for God and religion which is borne by the churches and chapels that are planted in our streets, to scatter the beams of divine truth over the darkness of the surrounding scenes ; while, at the same time, they open their doors to welcome the inquirers after the reality and repose of a better world. This, this is the church's mission and vocation : for this she is kept upon earth to be a witness for God, where God is so much forgotten, and to be so far his representative amidst his too thoughtless and disobedient creatures.

Already, then, does the need of earnestness commend itself to our judgment, and come home to our heart and conscience. With what state of mind should the church

apply herself to such a commission? Is this a work to be touched with careless hands, or pursued with listless steps? If, in ordinary and unimportant matters, matters which affect the character and the temporal interests of a fellow-creature, witness-bearing is esteemed of importance, and should be entered upon with seriousness, care, and caution, how much more so when we are to bear witness for God, and deliver a testimony that must inevitably affect the eternal welfare of immortal souls! If false witnessing be branded with such infamy, when it is offered in cases that relate to the character and the well-being of a fellow-creature, what degree of criminality must be attached to the act of bearing false witness for God!

Such a view is indeed most impressive, and has not yet perhaps received all the attention due to it from professing Christians. The mission and obligation of the church are the mission and obligation of the individual members of which it is composed, for it can in this case no otherwise act than by its individual members. To every reader of this work, these considerations are now addressed. You, yes, you, personally and individually, are intended to be a witness for God: have you thought of this, and are you habitually thinking of it? This is the end and purpose of your conversion: for this you are kept upon earth, instead of being immediately taken to heaven. You are asked, yea, implored, seriously to consider and accurately to understand your position, your duties, your responsibility. God detains you here to be a light to the world, and you can do this only by your personal religion. Think what kind of religion that ought to be which is to teach men, by what is seen in you, the nature of God, the work of Christ, the certainty of immortality, the value of salvation. Think how you ought to act if you would have it said of you, "His conduct is a true witness to all these matters." Will a lukewarm, careless, worldly, inconsistent piety answer such ends? Are you a true or a false witness? Tremble, as you well may, at the idea of giving to the world a lying testimony for God. Do, do ask whether

you are giving out, and living out, THE TRUTH concerning him and his word in your habitual character and conduct?

To bear witness for the truth, however, is not the only purpose which God intends should be accomplished by his church, but also *to propagate it*. It is not only to receive the treasure, but to diffuse it; not only to be a stationary oracle, giving out its responses to those who come to it for guidance, but to be a messenger carrying the proclamation into all lands. The Jewish church was a witness, and a glorious one too, for God. Its temple, with its altar, its sacrifices, and its worship; its kings, its prophets, and its priests; its sabbaths, and, above all, its lively oracles, bore witness for Jehovah. Its very locality, situated as it was in almost the very centre of the civilized world, and surrounded as it was by none but idolatrous nations, was admirably suited to this purpose. There stood the tabernacle of witness, there was the oracle of testimony, ever speaking, not only to the Jews, but to the multitudes of idol-worshipping people that dwelt in their immediate vicinity. The light of that heaven-kindled splendor might have been seen from afar, even by those who dwelt in the realms of darkness, and the valley of the shadow of death. The worshippers of Baal and Moloch, of Ashtaroath and of Tammuz, had only to turn towards Judea to see a light which revealed the atrocity of their conduct, and to hear a voice which rebuked their iniquity. Still this witness was stationary; it gleamed like a beacon from afar, but it did not revolve like the sun; it commissioned its priests and its prophets to receive all that came for instruction, but it did not bid them carry the glad tidings to distant realms. It opened a quiet haven into which the tempest-tossed ships might sail for refuge, but it did not send out the life-boat to fetch the sailors from the wreck; it opened its fold to the returning sheep, but did not send out its shepherd to seek after him in the wilderness, to bring him back; it welcomed the prodigal on his return, but did not, like the father in the parable, go out to look for him; all this belongs to the wider comprehension, and the richer

mercy of the Christian system. True it is that Judaism enjoined the same neighbor-love as does the Christian dispensation, and made it the duty of a Jew, if his brother erred, to restore him; and if he sinned, to rebuke him for his recovery; but the law enjoined no mission to the Gentiles; it contented itself with summoning the surrounding nations to come and receive instruction from its prophets and its priests; it *sent* them no message of life, no word of salvation.*

But now turn to the dispensation, the brightest and the richest ever granted to man, under which it is our mercy to live. Christianity has nothing local in its institutions, nothing limited in its provisions, nothing exclusive in its spirit. When the Sun of Righteousness rose upon our world, it was not to stand still on the hills and valleys of Judea, but with the mild aspect of universal benevolence, to pursue a course round the whole earth. Jesus Christ, by the power of his cross, threw down the middle wall of partition, and, standing upon its ruins, gathered his apostles around him, and said unto them, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Begin at Jerusalem, and let those that struck the rock be the first to drink of its healing streams; but stay not there; let repentance and remission of sins be preached to all nations. Content not yourselves, as did the priests and the prophets of the law, with inviting the perishing outcasts to come and be saved, but go to them. Mine is a richer grace, the very fulness of mercy; go, therefore, and carry to every perishing child of Adam the offer of love, the means of salvation; and neither rest nor stop till not an individual shall have to say, 'No man careth for my soul.'"

Such is the nature, the spirit, and the design of Christianity, and such its difference from Judaism: its doctrines, its duties, its institutions, have no peculiarities that

* See this beautifully illustrated in Dr. Harris' Sermon, entitled "The Witnessing Church," (republished in Boston, in a small volume, with several other works of Dr. Harris, under the title of the "Active Christian.")

fit them only for one place, or one people, but are like the light of the sun, and the air we breathe, adapted to every age and every people, whether burning under the line, or shivering at the poles ; whether enlightened by science and polished by learning, or whether wrapt in the gloom of barbarism and degraded to the brutal habits of savage life. And as it is adapted to all, so it is intended for all : no one nation can claim a deeper interest than another in the love of the Saviour, or the blessings of salvation. He is the Redeemer of the *world*. And the gospel being intended for all, it is the duty of those who possess it to extend it to those who have it not. Christianity explains the glowing language and splendid imagery in which the ancient seers had predicted the times of the Messiah ; and has revealed secrets which came not within the horizon of their far-seeing eye ; it has cleared up every perplexity, the solution of which eluded their inquiries, often as they employed themselves in “ searching what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” They perceived, through the clouds of their own dispensation, and amidst the haze of futurity, a dim splendor, which they could not comprehend. Those clouds have rolled off, that haze has cleared up, and though still future and distant, the glory of the millennial age is seen by us spreading over all lands. From the mount of vision we behold the beauties of holiness covering every region, and hear the song of salvation rising from every land. To our believing and enraptured eye, no less an object presents itself than the whole earth reposing in peace beneath the sceptre of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

How much is to be realized in that wondrous scene of grace and glory, to which, notwithstanding its present aspect of crime, and curse, and misery ; notwithstanding its present attitude of revolt, hostility, and enmity against God ; its present bondage to idolatry, tyranny, and barbarism ; our groaning earth, our weeping, bleeding, miserable world, is destined by a God of love ! And

how, but by the instrumentality of those who proclaim themselves his children by breathing his own Spirit, is this glorious regeneration of the nations to be accomplished? Yes, here is the vocation, the business, and the triumphs of the church. All this is to be done, not by the intervention of angels, but by the agency of man. The treasure of Christ's immeasurable riches is deposited, not in vessels of gold, cast and burnished in heaven, but in vessels of earthly mould, and evincing the weakness, the coarseness, and the brittleness of their original. To the church, Jehovah is ever saying, "for this purpose have I raised thee up, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth. Behold I send thee far hence to the Gentiles." In fulfilling this commission, the church is not to take her stand upon Calvary, and lifting up the blood-sprinkled sign, to summon the gods of the heathen to come and yield up their usurpations at her feet: no, but she is to carry that blessed symbol into the very Pantheon of idolatry, and by the power of God to drive out the rabble of divinities, and take possession of their desolate abode for him. She is to commence an invasion of the territory of Satan, rescue vassal nations from his yoke, overturn the altars of paganism on her march, and win the world for Him whose right it is to reign.

Here, we repeat, here is the purpose of God in continuing his church upon earth — to extend herself by her own sanctified energies, till by holding forth the fact and doctrine of the cross, she shall draw all men unto him that hung upon it. It is not for us to speculate upon the question whether the world's conversion could have been accomplished in any other way. It is enough for us to know that *this* is the way God has chosen, and ordained for this purpose. The weakness of the instrument magnifies the power of him by whom it is made efficient, and at the same time humbles the pride of that great adversary, who is to be utterly vanquished in the contest. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John iii. 8.

Let the church well consider what her divine Head

has thus intrusted to her hands, and is ever expecting from her exertions. Her own improvement, of course, is one part of her duty, as we shall afterwards show : for what must her own internal condition be to fit her for such an occupation ; but this is only a part of her duty ; the other part is—to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord.

Satan, when expelled from heaven, chose this earth as the place where he would raise the standard of revolt against Christ, as he had done in heaven, where he would fix the scene of his hostility, and the seat and centre of his empire of darkness. Hither has the Lord followed him, to bruise his head, and wrest the sceptre from his hands. For a while, and even yet to a considerable extent, the victory seems on the side of the god of this world. The conflict is, however, still going on : the battle still rages : and Jesus Christ summons his church to his standard. For this purpose, to secure his ultimate victory over Satan, he is “head over all things to his church,” and holds the government of the universe in his hands. He has one line of policy, and one plan of action, in all he does ; and that is the destruction of Satan’s kingdom, and the establishment of his own. For this the wheels of nature roll on, and the cycles of time are ever revolving. He is bending everything to his purpose, and gathering up everything into his scheme. The revolutions of empires, the issues of battles, the ambition of heroes, and the rise and fall of monarchs : the progress of civilization, the efflux of emigration, and the formation of colonies ; the discoveries of science, and the inventions of arts ; the course of the traveller, and the speculations of the philosopher ; the decrees of councils, the edicts of monarchs, and the debates of senates :—all, all, are within the sphere of his dominion, subject to the control of his power, and tributary to the advancement of his cause.

“As the world,” says an American preacher, “was wholly intended for the scene of redemption, all the good which it contains belongs to the plan of grace that was

laid in Christ. His kingdom comprises every valuable object which God proposed to himself in creating, preserving, and governing the world; the whole amount of his glory upon earth, and the immortal blessedness of millions of men. It is the only cause on earth that deserves an anxious thought: it is the only interest which God pursues or values. For this sole object were men created, and placed in this world, with social affections adapted to their present state. No one interest distinct from the kingdom of Christ are they required to pursue. No laws but such as directly or indirectly, proximately or ultimately, appertain to this kingdom, were ever enacted by heaven to direct their concerns. Their secular employments, their social duties, are enjoined in subordination to this kingdom. Their private and social propensities they are not indeed required to extinguish, but with these about them to march with a strong and steady step towards this great object, with their eye filled with its magnitude, and with hearts glowing with desires for its promotion. It is required that whether they eat, or drink, or whatever they do, they should do all with reference to this object. As then we can rely on the decisions of infinite wisdom, expressed both in the precepts and example of God, we are assured that this kingdom ought to engross the supreme cares of men, and exert a commanding influence over all their actions. The bosom of the *child* should be taught to beat with delight at the name of Jesus, before it is capable of comprehending the nature of his kingdom. The *youth* ought to regulate all his pleasures, his actions, and his hopes, with an eye fixed on this kingdom. The *man* ought to respect it in every important undertaking, in all his common concerns, in the government of his passions, and in the thoughts of his heart. Instead of pursuing with headlong zeal their own separate interests, all men should join in promoting this kingdom as the common interest of mankind—the great concern for which they were sent into the world.

“In applying this subject, I would summon, if I were able, all the kingdoms of the earth to arise in one mass to

urge forward the cause of the Redeemer. Assemble, ye people, from the four quarters of the globe; awake, ye nations, from your sleepy pillows — combine in this grand object of your existence, this common interest of the world. Ye husbands and wives, why are ye searching for happiness out of this kingdom, and overlooking the cause of Christ, as though he had no right to hold an interest on earth? Know ye, that no man is licensed to set up another on this ground, which is sacred to the Redeemer. What have ye to do in this world, if ye will not serve the Lord's anointed? If ye will not submit to his dominion, and join to advance his cause; go, go, to some other world — this world was made for Christ. But whither can ye go from his presence? All worlds are under his dominion. Ah! then return and let your bosoms swell with the noble desire to be fellow-workers with the inhabitants of other worlds in serving this glorious kingdom.

“My brethren, my brethren! while all the agents in the universe are employed, some with fervent desire, and others by involuntary instrumentality, to advance the cause of Christ, will an individual of you refuse it your cordial support? Can you in the centre of universal action consent to remain in a torpid state, absorbed in private cares, and contracted into a littleness for which you were never designed? Awake, and generously expand your desires to encircle this benevolent and holy kingdom.”

This is as true as it is eloquent, and lays before us in a most impressive manner our duty, our business, and our honor, as professing Christians. How little is this practically considered by the great bulk of professing Christians — yea, how little is it understood, or even admitted! How deeply are they sunk in the love and pursuits of the world, and how almost entirely occupied by its cares or its enjoyments! How few of them indulge and cherish such reflections as these: “I live in no ordinary age, either as respects the world or the church; and I must therefore be a man of the age, and for it! I cannot flatter myself into the belief that I am

one of those extraordinary individuals who are before their age ; but then I need not be one of those mean and creeping ones who are behind it. I learn clearly from the Scriptures that Christ's church is a missionary church, and that the spirit of Christianity is essentially a proselyting one. I am not to consider myself as sent into the world merely to get wealth, and enjoy myself. I am the servant of Christ, and must do my Master's work. I am bought with a price, and am not my own, and must yield myself up to my divine Proprietor. I am a soldier, and I am put in requisition by him to whom I belong. I am called out to service. The trumpet bids me to take my station round the standard, and join my comrades in arms to fight the battles of my Lord. The world is in rebellion and hostility against Christ, and I must take the field, and endeavor to bring it into subjection to him. I am but one—but I am one. I cannot do much, but I can do something : and all I can do, I ought to do ; and by God's grace will do."

It is to be known and recollected, I repeat, that what is the business or vocation of *the church*, is the business or vocation of every one of its members. This is not the work of apostles, or of reformers, or of ministers, or of missionaries only, it is your work by whomsoever these pages are read. In the movements and actions of the body, there is the movement and action of each limb, organ, and sense, and all animated by the one vitalizing, guiding, and impulsive soul ; and each contributes its measure of service in accomplishing whatever is achieved. There was no more and no other obligation to convert sinners resting on the conscience of the apostle Paul, viewed simply as a Christian, than rests now upon the conscience of each member of the Christian church. If you ask, then, by whom is the high destiny of the church to be fulfilled, the answer comes directly back, by *you*. You, each one of you, are the church, at least in part ; and in part the church's business lies with you. Ask not for any special command that is to bind you ; we may rather inquire for the special release that exempts you. You cannot be freed from the duty, the personal duty, of

seeing the world's conversion, without a fresh revelation from heaven. You must have a new Bible if you would be freed from this obligation, and a new order of things set up; for the old Bible and the old order clearly lay this obligation upon you. Would you wish to be freed from this obligation? What, so insensible to the honor of being a witness for God, and his instrument in converting the world, as to wish to devolve it upon another! Is this the life that comes from Christ the vine, into the branches grafted into him? Is this the vital power which proceeds from the head into every one of the members?

Do ask what you are doing and how you are living. Do the men of the world see clearly that while you are as diligent in business, as careful of your families, as good citizens as they are, you have another errand upon earth, another object of pursuit, another engrossing interest, than anything to be found among things seen and temporal? Are you carrying out the noble assertion of the apostle, made on behalf of the whole church, "Our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven"? Does the spiritual patriotism of the kingdom of Christ glow in your bosom, as the love of his country did in that of the Roman citizen in the purest age of the Republic? Or are you taken up in getting and enjoying wealth, grandeur, and worldly ease? Citizens of the New Jerusalem, inhabitants of the holy city that cometh down out of heaven, I call upon you to rouse from your lethargy, to throw off your indolence, your worldliness, and to gird yourselves for the great work of bearing testimony for God to a dark, infatuated, and miserable world. Leave it not to ministers and missionaries; it is yours also to lift high the heaven-lighted torch which is to illumine the earth. But then, for such a purpose, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness! What an honor, and what an arduous one too, would you deem it, to have a commission to carry a specific to a country where the plague was sweeping its inhabitants by millions to the grave! Or to be the herald of emancipation to a nation of slaves Or to convoy

a fleet of vessels laden with food to a starving people! But infinitely higher than this is *your* commission, for you are put in trust with the gospel for curing the diseases, achieving the liberty, and providing the food, of countless millions of immortal souls. God has called you first of all to obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory, for yourself; and being thus qualified for the work, then, as far as in you lies, to extend that salvation to the ends of the earth. Christians, there is your vocation: understand it, value it, pursue it:

“ ’Tis what might fill an angel’s heart,
And filled a Saviour’s hands.”

Now a proselyting church must of course be an earnest one. He must have formed very inadequate ideas of what is necessary for the conversion of a world from sin and Satan, to Christ and holiness, who imagines this will ever be done without the most intense earnestness, and a degree of self-devotement which has never been witnessed, except in a comparatively few instances, since the days of the apostles. It was this that made even the heroic Paul exclaim, in an agonizing consciousness of inability, “ Who is sufficient for these things ? ” Let any one imagine what a triumph over all the selfishness, the cupidity, the worldliness, the indolence, the luxuriousness, which are to be found among professors, must take place; and what a predominance of the holy, heavenly, spiritual, self-denying, generous virtues must come on — what a general breaking down of all the barriers of prejudice between different denominations of Christians must be effected — what a fair and open field for the operations of Christian zeal must be presented — what a mighty growth of spiritual power from all sections of the one church must be exhibited — before ever these realms of darkness and wickedness are evangelized. What a great work it must be to overtake the population of even this country with the means of religious instruction, and to reclaim from sterility and desolation the vast and neglected wastes which are found here; and to drain and cultivate these

pestilent bogs of ignorance, crime, and misery! And this is only but as the homestead, and the garden, compared with the wilderness of Paganism and Mahomedanism which lies beyond. Let any man cast his eye over a map of our globe, with a geographical and historical knowledge of the tyrannical governments, the idolatrous religions, the savage barbarism, the multifarious languages, the unapproachable suspicion, which are comprehended under the names and within the lines that are before him; and then think of winning all this to Christ, and covering all these dark domains of sin and Satan with the beauties of holiness, the joys of hope, and the blessings of salvation — and yet this is the business of the church, its labor, and its hope. Will these valleys be filled up, these mountains be levelled? Will these crooked things be made straight, and these rough places be made plain, without an earnestness we have never yet witnessed? Is there not an agonizing effort, such as we know nothing about, yet to be called forth, by which all this is to be achieved? We have even yet to learn what kind of work we have undertaken, in setting our hands to the world's conversion; and must be made to learn, perhaps, more painfully, more impressively, than we have yet done, the nature of the difficulties that are to be overcome, that we may see what kind of men, and what kind of efforts, are required for the accomplishment of the marvellous and glorious consummation.

This is the burden which the Lord has laid upon us of this age, above most other ages that have preceded us, and which we dare not cast off from us; but concerning which we must set ourselves to inquire how it is to be borne, so as that his work may prosper, and the church of our day well and successfully do her part.

It is but too evident that the church of this age, and perhaps, with few exceptions, the church of every age, has but very imperfectly and inadequately understood her vocation as a testifying and proselyting body. She has been too secular and too selfish. She has not allowed the wondrous truths which she professes to exert all their power, and has quenched the Divine Spirit which dwell-

eth in her as in his bodily temple. Christians seem to be trying the dangerous and desperate experiment of gaining just religion enough to save them from hell and take them to heaven ; rather than putting forth all their desires and energies to see how much of the light, and power, and joy of true godliness they can possess. They seem as if they would be content to float into the haven of eternal rest upon any plank or fragment of the shipwrecked vessel, rather than intensely long to make a prosperous voyage, and have an "abundant entrance," with every sail set, the precious cargo all preserved, and to drop their anchor amidst the acclamations of the admiring multitudes who throng the heavenly strand.

We can conceive that a time will come when the heavenly and holy calling will be better understood and more perfectly exhibited. When Christians will be seen on every hand, taking up as their rule of conduct the apostle's epitome of his whole moral self, and saying in truth, "For me to live is Christ." When personal ease, domestic comfort, and the acquisition of wealth, knowledge or fame, though not neglected, will all be considered as very secondary and subordinate matters to the great business of bearing testimony for God, and converting the world to him. When they will feel that "the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself," and consider themselves as something sacred to God, formed for himself to show forth his praise. Instead of looking with envy and an imitative propensity on the men of this world, who devote themselves wholly and successfully to the acquisition of wealth, grandeur and power, they will pray to be delivered from them, as pursuing a low, sordid, and a sinful course, compared with their own, in witnessing for God, and spreading the savor of his knowledge through the world ; and will feel that so that they do but fulfil their mission, they can be content to be the witnesses who prophesy in sackcloth. They will no more dream of giving themselves up to personal ease and enjoyment, as the great object of desire and pursuit, to the neglect or lukewarm accomplishment of the design of their profession, than would an ambassador sent to bear testimony for his

sovereign and his nation in a foreign court, and before an antagonistic and hostile people. Up then, ye soldiers of the cross — gird you for the conflict — quit you like men. The world is all before you. The commission is in your hands. Victory awaits you. With such a Captain and such a cause, what enemy could prevent you from winning the world for Christ, and immortal honors for yourselves ?

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CHAPTER II.

REMARKS ON THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA, — REVELATION, CHAPTERS I., II., III., — TENDING TO ILLUSTRATE THE NATURE OF EARNESTNESS IN RELIGION.

It is a matter of no moment to the design of this work, in what light these epistles are to be considered; whether as the past real histories of the churches here mentioned, and of their actual condition at the time, or as symbolical or prophetic representations of the different states through which the church was then destined to pass in its future history; since the spiritual instruction to be gathered from them is the same in either case. The former supposition seems the more likely one, and it is probable that these churches were specially under the superintendence of the beloved apostle during the decline of his life; not, however, these alone, but they were the more considerable ones under his care; and as the seals, the trumpets, and the vials, were all in sevens, so, to preserve the harmony, the churches also were set forth under that number.

Though the epistles were addressed to the presiding pastor or bishop under the designation of "the angel," for what reasons it does not appear quite clear, it is evident that they were intended for the whole church.

It is not proposed here to go into any minute exposition of these addresses, but only to make some general remarks upon them, tending to show the nature and necessity of an earnest piety, and to stir up the churches to seek after it.

1. Unlike the other inspired apostolical epistles, these are all delivered by the Lord Jesus Christ in person through the medium of the apostle, and are therefore ana¹

ogous, in that particular, to the messages which, under the Jewish dispensation, the prophets delivered to the people, with a "Thus saith the Lord." This indicates the deep interest which Jesus Christ takes in the spiritual welfare of all and each of his churches. His regard to these seven communities was by no means exclusive or special: all others which then existed were as dear to his heart, because as much the purchase of his blood, as they: and so are all that now exist, even to the least company of believers in the most obscure village. How exquisitely beautiful is the description given of him, as, "*He who walketh amidst the seven golden candlesticks:*" and how impressive a symbol is this of the design of each church to be a fountain of the purest light to the place in which it exists. Can anything more emphatically remind us than this symbol, of the devoutness, the zeal, the spiritual knowledge, which each church should possess, since it is formed to illuminate a dark world, is under the personal superintendence of the Lord Jesus, and is an object of his solicitous care? How earnest is he on behalf of every community of the faithful as a whole, and every member of it in particular.

2. The address to each church commences with the same solemn assurance of his intimate acquaintance with its spiritual condition: "I KNOW THY WORKS." He thus declares that he is ever looking upon his churches, not as we look, from a distance, but with an eye immediately fixed upon each—not with a cursory or general glance, but with a close and minute inspection into the state of every heart; so that his knowledge of each member is as perfect as his knowledge of the entire church, and is derived from its proper source—the real facts of every case subjected to that all-searching eye, which is represented by a flame of fire, chap. ii. 18. This is expressed with still more explicitness in his address to the church at Thyatira, to which he says, "All the churches," not the world merely, but "*the churches* shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." This asserts not only his power or his right, but his occupa-

tion ; he is ever thus engaged ; his eyes are always running to and fro through every church. His attention is minute and specific ; it is not the church collectively, but the church in its individual members, that is the subject of his scrutiny. How anxiously and how inquisitively should each church say, what does he see in *us*? and each member say, what does he see in *me*? Can anything be a stronger incitement to diligence, to earnestness, to entire self-consecration, than the thought that we are ever in the great task-master's eye. Over each one of us continually rolls the thrilling and solemn announcement, "I know thy works." Could we but set the Lord always before us ; could we but realize him as at our right hand ; could we but even look up to him as present, though invisible, saying to' him, "Thou God seest me," should we need anything more to stir us up to the most intense devotedness?

3. Christ always begins his addresses to these churches with the language of commendation, where there is anything to commend. How condescending, kind, and gracious is this, and what a lesson does it furnish to us for regulating our conduct towards each other ! How encouraging is this in all our attempts to please him, and what an incentive to labor more abundantly for him ! He is not a hard master, nor an ungracious one, turning away with indifference and disdain from the services of his people. The feeblest efforts made by his feeblest disciple, when made with sincerity, are accepted by him - the wish, the sigh, the tear, the inarticulate and unuttered, because unutterable, groaning, are all noticed by him, and received with a most condescending, "Well done." O, Christians, shall such a master be served with a slack hand, a tardy foot, or a cold heart ? Shall stinted, grudging, or lukewarm services be offered to *Him*? Shall less than the best, or the utmost, be done for *Him*? "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a

great Klag, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." Mal. i. 14.

4. At the same time, Christ, in the exercise of a righteous severity, rebuked each church for what was wrong, where he found anything worthy of reproof. His love is not a blind and doating affection, which sees no fault in its object; but is a wise and judicious regard, which searches out failings, not so much to expose and punish, as to correct and remove them. Even to the most corrupt of the seven churches, he said, after a severe reprehension, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Inconsistent and negligent professors! ye who know your worldliness; your evil dispositions; your breaches of truth, honor, and justice; your neglects of prayer in the closet and in the family; your general declensions and decay of piety; your gross irregularities and manifest inconsistencies — hearken to his reproving voice; look at his frowning countenance; dread his continued rebukes. Amend your doings. Put away the evil that is in you. *He* will not tolerate sin in you; nor should *you* in yourselves.

5. Each address closes with a promise of reward to those who are victorious in the Christian conflict. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God — he shall not be hurt by the second death — I will give to him to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it — I will give him power over the nations — he shall be clothed with white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels — I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out — and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God: and I will write upon him my new name — and he shall sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne."³

Such are the exceeding great and precious promises

which are made to those who "come off more than conquerors through him that hath loved them" in the fight of faith, and which, though distributed among the churches, will all be fulfilled in every individual victor. Though some of the expressions have a meaning which can never be fully developed in this world, that very difficulty seems to add to their value, since it exhibits in vague and general outline an object too vast to be comprehended, and too bright to be seen by our present limited and feeble vision. Christians, look up at these stupendous objects of hope, floating in obscure grandeur behind the dim and mysterious transparency of Holy Scripture; and then imagine, and it can only be faintly, the reward of successful diligence. You are engaged in a conflict of immense difficulty and of tremendous importance. See what consequences hang upon it; and for what stake you are contending. An archangel coming direct from the throne of God, with all the scenes of eternity and heavenly glory fresh in his recollection, could not make you comprehend the weight, and the brilliancy, and the worth, of that crown which is held forth by the hand of infinite love, to engage your ardor in the contest against sin, Satan, and the world. Earnestness! Where? for what? and in whom should it be expected, if not in him who is contending upon earth for glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life? Is he a cold statue or a living man, who can see such objects placed before him, and not feel every ambitious desire influenced, and all his energy engaged for their possession? It was on this the mind of the apostle was fixed when he uttered that heart-exciting, soul-inspiring language — "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. iii. 13, 14. If an apostle felt such earnestness indispensable, inevitable, and necessary, how much more should we!

Let us now take up each epistle separately, and learn the one great lesson which each seems adapted and designed to teach

EPHESUS, CHAP. II. 1.

“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write. These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh amidst the seven golden candlesticks : I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil ; and thou hast tried them that say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars : and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. This thou hast, thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, [i. e., a sect of practical anti-nomians,] which I also hate.”

We are ready to exclaim, what a church and what a character ! They worked, yea, *labored*, for Christ ; they were called to suffer persecution, and instead of apostatizing, endured their sufferings with patience ; they maintained a strict and holy discipline, and cast out from among them impostors and evil characters ! Is anything wanted *here* ? Will the Lord Jesus find any fault with *them* ? Yes, he did. He commended them for their good, but “Nevertheless,” said he, “I have somewhat against thee, because *thou hast left thy first love*. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of thy place, except thou repent.” I know of nothing more alarming and impressive than such a rebuke to such a church.

Now the lesson taught us here is, *that no measure of attainment in churches or individual members will satisfy Christ, while any palpable defect in other things is observable*. We cannot, we must not, attempt to compound for attention to some things by the neglect of others. Here was a church that excelled in so many arduous duties, that one should have almost expected to hear nothing but the language of unmixed commendation ; and we are ready to say, if such a community was rebuked for deficiency, what shall be said of us ? How we ought to tremble ! Their sin was *a leaving of first love* ; their religious

affections had abated, the spirituality of their minds had declined, their joy was not so lively, nor their love so ardent, as it once was ; and notwithstanding their labor, and patience, and external holiness, the Lord Jesus rebuked them even with threatenings. How fearfully common is this declension ! How many are there, who are saying,

“ Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord :
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word ?

“ What peaceful hours I once enjoyed !
How sweet their memory still !
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.”

This is so common that many are almost ready to excuse it as a state to be looked for in the natural course of things ; but Christ treats it as a sin, and calls upon the party to repent of it ; and threatens, if they do not, to remove the candlestick out of its place.

I ask, then, if anything less than the most intense earnestness can prevent this declension, or recover us from it when we have fallen into it ? The language of Christ to us all is, “ Go on unto perfection.” Which of our modern churches can compare with this at Ephesus, and which of them therefore should not hear the words of Christ addressed to them, “ Repent, repent !”

SMYRNA, CHAP. II. 8.

“ Unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write. I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer ; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried ; and ye shall have tribulation ten days ; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

Now it is observable that this is one of the two churches against which nothing is alleged in the way of blame :

and to which no language of rebuke is addressed : and it is evident at the same time that it was much and sorely tried by persecution. This persecution had reduced them to great poverty. " We see here of what little account worldly wealth is in the estimation of Christ. We hear much of *respectable* congregations and churches, where little else is meant by that but that they are numerous or opulent ; but the estimation of Christ goes on quite another principle. What a contrast there is between this church and that at Laodicea ! *They* were rich in this world's goods, but poor towards God ; *these* were poor in this world, but rich towards God."

Now the lesson to be learnt from this church is, *that persecution, if it reduce the numbers of professors, is favorable to eminent piety.*

In times of unrestricted liberty, external prosperity, and unmolested ease, such as ours, especially in an age when evangelical sentiment is to a certain extent fashionable, professors of religion multiply fast ; but like the luxuriant produce of tropical regions, they want the strength and solidity which colder climates and more frosty atmospheres give to the plants and trees which grow under their influence. Persecution, which withers and destroys the profession of multitudes of these effeminate and feeble followers of Christ, leaves the deeply rooted plants of God's own right hand planting still growing strong and fair. What strange and awful havoc in our churches would one year of bitter and oppressive intolerance make ! In what numbers would the soft, luxurious and self-indulgent members drop off from the fellowship of the faithful : and, on the other hand, in what majestic grandeur and heroism would the cross-bearers stand forth, and revive the martyr age of suffering and glory. As skilful and intrepid seamen are formed by the tempest ; as heroes are made in the battle-field ; and as gold is purified in the furnace ; so eminent Christians are raised up, and called forth, by the force of persecution.

Now let us all consider what kind of religion that must be which makes a man a martyr ; what depth of

conviction, what strength of faith, what ardor of love, what liveliness of hope! Let us think what a value and impression of eternity; what an assurance of heaven; what a conquest of the world; what an emancipation from the fear of death, there must be, to make a man press forward in his religious profession, not only at the hazard, but with the certainty, of bonds, imprisonments, and death! Is ours such a religion? Do we know the power of a principle which the prospect of the scaffold could not overcome; and the ardor of an attachment which the agonies of the stake could not extinguish? Have we a self-denial, a habit of mortification and crucifixion as regards our sinful desires, which is itself the germ of the martyr-spirit, and which makes it clearly intelligible, how *we* could die for it? Is there, when we are looking round upon a quiet and happy home, and upon a circle of endeared relations, such a state of mind as this, "I feel as if, by God's grace, I could give up all this, rather than deny my Lord." This is required in all who would be Christ's disciples. He will accept no man on other terms. It is his own declaration, which we should do well to study, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple; and whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26. This single passage seems enough to circulate alarm through all Christendom, and to excite apprehension in the minds of nine tenths of the professed disciples of the Lamb, about the sincerity of their religion. We are involuntarily led, in consternation, to say, "Who then can be saved? What diligence and devotedness; what solicitude and intense earnestness, are necessary to justify and sustain our pretensions to such a religion as this! Who has enough of the pure gold, or is free enough from the dross of sin, to stand the test of such a fire?"

PERGAMOS, CHAP. II. 12.

"Unto the angel of the church in Pergamos write. These things saith he that hath the sharp sword with

two edges : I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is ; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth."

Pergamos was a city of Mysia, in Asia Minor, the capital of the province, the seat of government, and the residence of a race of monarchs whose ambition it was to make it rival Rome or Alexandria in wealth, grandeur, and elegance. It abounded with idol temples, in which the most impure and lascivious orgies were celebrated ; it was addicted to excessive luxury, effeminacy, and corruption, and was infamous in Roman history for the polluting influence which, in its subjugation by that people, it exercised over their conduct. So that very emphatically might it have been said, "Satan's seat was there," and that there he dwelt as in his loved abode. Yet amidst these abominations was planted a Christian church. It was not to be wondered at that in such a place persecution should be kindled, and should rage against those whose doctrines and whose practices were a constant and a severe rebuke upon the religion and works of the whole city. In the persecution, Antipas, perhaps a faithful pastor, was crowned with martyrdom, and probably others with him. The great bulk of the church continued steadfast amidst surrounding opposition, and pure amidst surrounding vice. It requires a stretch of imagination to conceive of the earnestness which must have been cherished and exhibited by those who remained faithful.

Yet even here there were some who were exceptions to the rest ; some that held the doctrines of Balaam,

who had instructed Balak to seduce the Israelites into the lascivious rites of the Moabitish idolatry. By this we are to understand that some of the members of that church, while professing the doctrines of the gospel, gave connivance in some way or other to the flagitious idolatry of their city; and, in addition, there were some of the antinomian Nicolaitanes there also. For this the church was called to repentance, which they were to exercise and manifest by bearing testimony against such sins, and by separating the transgressors from their communion.

The lessons to be learnt from the history of this church are two; *the danger of professors of religion imitating the manners of the age and country in which they live; and the sinfulness in the sight of God of retaining ungodly persons in communion.* In every age and every country, the church has been exposed to peculiar trials of its constancy, consistency, and fidelity, by the prevalence of surrounding evils, ever varying with the circumstances of the times, but always existing in some form or other. These it is its wisdom to know, and its duty to avoid. In these lie its chief danger, and in avoiding them its chief difficulty. It is far more easy to reconcile ourselves to common and prevailing sins, than to such as are rare and infrequent; to follow the multitude to do evil, than to pursue a solitary or almost deserted path of sin. Custom abates the dread, and in the estimation of some almost annihilates the criminality, of transgression. That cannot be wrong which so many and such reputable persons do without scruple, is the false and fatal but common logic by which Satan deludes not only the world, but also the church. Hence it is the duty of professors to study well the circumstances, habits, customs, and tendencies of the times in which they live, in order to ascertain what evils have obtained credit under the veil of currency and fashion. God's laws do not change with the times, nor does he lower his requirements to meet the relaxed and degenerate morality of a lukewarm generation. We are not to be carried about with divers and strange *practices*, any more than

with divers and strange *doctrines*: the morals of Christianity are as fixed and unalterable as its truths. To resist the tyranny of custom, and the seductions of fashion; to wade against the stream of prevalent example; to be singular, when that singularity is an emphatic protest and severe rebuke, which are sure to irritate the many who feel themselves condemned; to draw down the taunt of an ostentatious puritanism, and the imputation of an affected sanctimoniousness — this is no easy task — yet it is demanded of us all — but can be achieved only by an earnestness of mind which amounts to a species of moral heroism. Vices condemned by all, improprieties which are disgraceful and involve a loss of reputation, are easily avoided; and virtues which are in universal repute, as easily practised; but the sins which are attended with no disgrace, but on the contrary have changed their names into virtues, and are committed under a plea of necessity; and virtues which have acquired the character of a morose and proud asceticism, are shunned with aversion and disgust. Christian professors! the downward progress of the church of Christ has in our age commenced; the deteriorating process is in operation. Awake, open your eyes, look around you!

But this is not the only lesson taught by the history of the church at Pergamos: we learn also how displeasing, in the eyes of Christ, is impurity of communion. Every church is intended to be a light of the world, not only by its creed but by its conduct. Holiness is light, as well as truth. God is light; by which is intended that he is holy. Creeds, confessions, and articles, except as they are sustained by their practical influence in the fruits of righteousness, do little good; they may be as the flame which is to illuminate a dark world, but the misconduct of those by whom they are professed so beclouds the glass of the lamp with smoke and impurity, that no light comes forth, and the lamp itself is unsightly and offensive. To receive or retain unholy men as members of our churches, is a fearful corruption of the church of Christ, which was ever intended to be a “congregation of faithful men,” a communion of saints. How severely did the

apostle rebuke the Corinthian church for retaining its incestuous member, and how peremptorily did he command his excision. To retain notorious sinners in the fellowship of the church is the most awful connivance at sin which can be practised in our world, for it is employing the authority of that body to defend the transgressor and to apologize for his offence. There is a strong repugnance in some persons to proceed, almost in any case, to the act of excluding an unworthy member, just as there is, in cases of disease, to give up a mortified limb to amputation,—but it must be done; the safety as well as the comfort of the body requires it. In the case of sudden falls, and single sins, where there is a deep sense and ingenuous confession of sin, much lenity should be observed; but where the sin is public and aggravated, and the conscience hardened, to show mercy in such a case, is high treason against Christ, by retaining enemies and rebels in his kingdom who are virtually seeking its overthrow. The church is a band of witnesses to the necessity and excellence of holiness, and anything which could enfeeble or divaricate that testimony is infinitely mischievous to the cause of Christian morality, and therefore grossly insulting to him who died, “to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Whenever the church ceases to bear testimony for holiness, it abandons its commission, and is no longer a witness for Christ. If it lean to either side, it should be to the side of severity of discipline, rather than of laxness, since it is far better that an offending member should have this addition to the burden of his punishment, than that the character of the church, as a witness for holiness, should be impaired. What a horrid caricature, what a monstrous perversion, what a profanity of the very idea of a Christian church, has been given to the world, by the so-called church of Rome; by that sty of beastly sensuality, that slaughter-house of horrid murder, that emporium of chartered crime, and commerce of iniquity, which the Vatican has presented in past ages to the eyes of an astonished, disgusted, and loathing world! And even now, what a sphere of Jesuit craft,

and odious vice, are most of the countries which are included in the Roman see, and within the membership of the Roman church! How summarily and how truly is the whole described by that one comprehensive and expressive phrase, "THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY!" The true church must be, and is, in direct opposition to this; it bears upon its lofty front this inscription, "Holiness to the Lord," and it stands out adorned with the beauties of holiness, as a living witness for him, who in the cherubim's song is lauded as the "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty."

THYATIRA, CHAP. II. 18.

"Unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write: I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols: and I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden."

Thyatira was a city of Macedonia, of some celebrity in its day, and is still a considerable place, in the possession of the Turks. In the church at this place our Lord saw much to commend. His eulogium is very strong. There was faith, charity, patience, service, works, and, what was the reverse of the state of the church in Ephesus, which had left its first love, the last works of the church in Thyatira were more than the first. Of how few churches can this be said! How many are rather

declining in piety than advancing ; but here was growth, progress. Here last love was stronger than the first. Yet even in this church there was something to condemn ; nor would the good do to set over against the bad.

What is meant by the woman Jezebel, whether it is to be interpreted literally of some female of rank and influence, set forth under this name, who exerted a pernicious influence in corrupting the church by false doctrine, and practices arising out of it — or whether it is to be understood mystically, as importing a corrupt faction, who, though united to God's people as Jezebel was by marrying an Israelitish prince, yet were attached to idolatry, and labored to seduce others into it, is not easy to determine ; nor is it important to our present purpose that it should be so determined. Probably the allusion is to some false teachers who were assiduous in corrupting the minds of the church. On these wicked men God denounced the most awful threatenings, if they repented not.

The lesson for the churches to learn from this epistle is, *that it is our duty to set our face against the teachers of false doctrine, especially such doctrine as relaxes the bonds of moral obligation, and is opposed to the purity of God's law.*

When our Lord prayed in behalf of his people that they might be sanctified by the truth ; and when the apostle described the doctrines of the gospel as “the truth according to godliness,” this great sentiment was taught us, that error is essentially polluting ; for if truth sanctify, error must corrupt ; except two causes so diametrically opposite to each other as truth and falsehood can produce the same effects. The germ of holiness lies hid in every truth, and of sin in every error ; and therefore much does it become the church to hold fast the truth. It is a notion with many that there is no sin in error. The adage of Pope has been adopted by multitudes in these free-thinking, latitudinarian days :

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.”

This is true in the letter, but false in the spirit, since there can be no right life, in the scriptural sense of the

word "right," but what comes from a right mode of faith — so that if the former be correct, so must be the latter. The intention of the poet, however, was to annihilate the importance of distinctive sentiments on religion, and by insinuating that all were equally valuable, or equally valueless, to subvert the very throne of truth, and thus to do away the authority and obligation of the Bible. This hackneyed couplet is a dreadful dogma of scepticism, soaked and drenched with infidelity to its very core. This bantling of infidelity has been foisted upon the church, and profanely baptized by the name of charity : depend upon it, it knows nothing of charity but the name, and if the father of it had not renounced the Bible, he would have known that errors of doctrine, to whatever extent they go, show a mind not yet brought into subjection to Christ. If a man may renounce one truth of revelation, and yet be sinless, he may renounce two ; if two, four ; if four, eight ; if eight, half the Bible ; if half, the whole ; and yet be innocent. What, then, become of those threatenings which are denounced against all unbelievers ; and of those numerous passages which suspend our salvation upon the reception of the truth as it is in Jesus ? It may be difficult and altogether impossible for us to draw the line between doctrines essential to salvation and such as are not, and to fix upon that kind and that measure of error which is incompatible with true religion : we had better not make the attempt, but leave those who hold false doctrines to the justice or mercy of God. There is, in this respect, the same difficulty in practical as in speculative error. Who shall undertake to declare what measure of sinful conduct is incompatible with personal safety as regards eternity ? Still we may hold, and should hold, the importance of truth, and the sinfulness of error, as well as of practice, and on this ground should "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." Let this be one object, and no inconsiderable one either, of an earnest church, to stand up for the great fundamental truths of salvation. We have arrived at a latitudinarian age : a spurious phi-

losophy is creeping over us : an unconcealed hostility to those truths which we had thought were settled as the faith of the universal church, is now extensively manifested, from opposition to which we must not shrink under the pusillanimous dread of being classed with the bigots and petrifications of a by-gone age. Our theology is our glory, not indeed in the form of a stiff, cold, statue-like symmetry of dogmatic system, but as the warm life blood flowing through our practical religion. The attempt of many is to persuade us to give up and abandon our creeds ; instead of this, our object should be to give them life, vigor, power, and beauty, in holy actions, spiritual affections, and heavenly aspirations. The aim of many is to philosophize our faith into metaphysical speculation : ours should be to infuse faith into philosophy. Give up our theology ! Then farewell to our piety. Give up our theology ! Then dissolve our churches. for our churches are founded upon truth. Give up our theology ! Then next vote our Bibles to be myths ; and this is clearly the aim of many — the destruction of all these together, our piety, our churches, our Bibles. What is it that has given us our confessors but our theology ? What is the inscription emblazoned on the banners of the noble army of martyrs, and that has formed the song to which these moral heroes have marched to battle, victory, and death ? what, but the apostle's injunction, " Contend *earnestly* for the faith once delivered to the saints !" Give up our theology ! Then what have we as the children of God, begotten by the incorruptible seed of the word, and taught to feed upon the unadulterated milk of the word, to live upon ? Give up our theology ! Then with what armor and with what weapons shall we carry on the missionary war against the powers of darkness in the fields of paganism ? Give up our theology ! And what are we to receive in return ? What is offered to us for that which has founded our churches, been the theme of our ministers, the life of our souls, the means of all the religion we have possessed ? What has philosophy ever yet done, what *can* she do, or is fitted to do, for a lost world. and a ruined race ; for groaning,

bleeding, dying humanity? No, in abandoning our theology, we give up God's most glorious revelation, and man's last hope.

Let an earnest church, therefore, put out its noblest and most determined energies in holding fast the form of sound words. Let there be no coquetting on the part of our theological literature with unsanctified genius in the form of infidel poetry, and sceptical philosophy: no eulogy on writers and their productions avowedly hostile to Christianity, unaccompanied at any rate with firm, calm, yet indignant, protests against their enmity to revealed truth. Let there be no attempts to catch a compliment from men who hate our religion, for the candor with which their unbelief is treated. Painful instances of this kind have occurred of late, in which periodicals avowedly devoted not only to Christianity, but to evangelical doctrines, have spoken of infidel writers and their works in a style of compliment, not to say flattery, which has greatly astonished and sorely grieved the friends of truth. We want not that the just tribute to genius should be withheld, much less do we ask that the most virulent infidels should be assailed with a virulence equal to their own. Our religion teaches us to be courteous, and meek, and forbearing: but it teaches us, at the same time, "not to bear them which do evil," and to withstand them to the uttermost. Infidelity is never so dangerous as when associated with poetry and philosophy; and to beguile the young to these dreadful snares, by compliments lavished on the authors of the mischief, without corresponding protestations and warnings against the poison, is strange work for the Christian essayist or reviewer. What is it but to furnish the gilt to cover the pill, or the honey to conceal the poison? Never, never was there an era in the history of religion, when it more became the master minds, the *beaux-esprits* of evangelical truth, to summon their energies to the great conflict now going on between truth and error, and to manifest an intense earnestness in upholding the divine authority and momentous importance of evangelical truth.

SARDIS, CHAP. III. 1.

“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.”

Sardis was the capital of the kingdom of Lydia, in Grecian history, and has acquired a notoriety by its having been the seat of government to a monarch whose name has become the proverb of wealth, and his end a proof of the instability of human greatness,—I mean Cræsus.

The description of the state of this church is not very creditable to its religious character. It had “a name to live,” by which we are to understand it was held in repute by surrounding churches as in a flourishing condition. Its members perhaps were considerable, their circumstances respectable, their orthodoxy undoubted, and their general conduct reputable. They were neither immoral nor heretical—but all the while, though thus esteemed, the church was dead; not in the fullest sense of the term, but comparatively so, for in the next clause it is said, there were some *remains of life*, but which seemed ready to expire. The charges brought against it were of a serious nature, affecting its spiritual, though perhaps not its moral, condition. Christ tells the members he had not found their works perfect before God, implying that his churches ought to go on unto perfection—he represents their piety as in the lowest state of declension—and this was the more sinful, as at one time they appear to have been in a far better state, from which they had backslidden. Many, if not most of them, had defiled their garments, had soiled their profession

and affections by worldly conformity, though perhaps not by vice. In short, its condition was low, flat, and languishing, so as to be an illustration of the Saviour's metaphor of the salt that had lost its savor. It is bad for the world to be dead; for a church to be so is far worse: it is bad when many individuals are so, but when the great bulk of a Christian community is so, it is deplorable indeed. Yet this was not the case with the whole body, for our Lord says, "There were a few names even in Sardis, which had not defiled their garments," and whom he would not involve in indiscriminate censure. For their sakes, for the sake of their reputation and their comfort, he excepted them from his general charge against the body.

The lessons to be learnt from the epistle to this church are two: FIRST, *In the midst of general declension it is possible for any one to keep up the power of vital godliness*, and in most cases there are some who do. There are few churches in which, however prevalent may be the corruption of the body, there are none who are exceptions to the general rule; none who are "faithful found among the faithless;" none who mourn in secret for the declension of their brethren, and who by example and reproof endeavor to arrest the progress of decay. Even in the most degenerate days of Israel's apostasy, when Elijah knew not where to look for a second worshipper of the living and true God, there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. What honor encircles those members, how precious are they in the eyes of God, who are not carried away by the swelling stream of corruption, but stand firm to the doctrines and spiritualities of the gospel profession! Their conduct shows what can be done to maintain our ground against prevalent declension. It is a beautiful spectacle to see a few consistent, spiritually-minded professors holding on the even tenor of their way, when the greater part of the church are gradually sinking into worldly conformity; bearing high the standard of the cross, and becoming a rallying point for all the piety that remains in the church; laboring by prayer, example, and persua-

sion, to save the walls of their Zion from bearing the inscription of "Ichabod;" and amidst the indignation, contempt, or reproach of men whose consciences are wounded by their testimony, pursuing their holy and blameless career. Happy few! Your Master knows your works, your trials, your difficulties, and will reward them all. Be not disheartened therefore or discouraged by the frowns and imputations of worldly-minded professors, who will not be backward to set down your conduct to spiritual pride, to an affected singularity, or sanctimonious hypocrisy. Men who withstand the corruptions of the church can expect no better treatment than those who reform the evils of the world. Nay, a resentment more bitter, an exasperation more angry, and a malignity more envenomed, will be often cherished, by inconsistent and hypocritical professors of religion, towards those who rebuke their conduct, than by the men of the world, just because a deeper wound is inflicted in their conscience. Let us covet to be among the few who are counted worthy to stand in the gap when a breach has been made in the wall, and to keep out the enemy. The prevalence of evil is no excuse for committing it. God can, and will, assist all who are anxious to be kept. He will inspire them, if they seek it, with the courage of heroes, and the constancy of martyrs. He will be a wall of fire round about them for defence, and guide them through every difficulty as by a pillar of cloud. Amidst envious eyes that watch them, spiteful tongues that love to speak ill of them, and hearts that wait for their halting, he will preserve them blameless, and assist them to hold on their way. Let no one say, I fear I cannot be a reformer, or even a witness. God can nerve the most timid mind with courage, and make the most faltering tongue fluent in his cause, where there is an anxiety to maintain the purity of the church, and to uphold, amid such trying circumstances, the consistency of the Christian profession.

SECONDLY. But another and a most impressive lesson which is taught by this epistle is—*that churches may*

have a reputation for being in a flourishing condition, which are all the while in a state of progressive decay.

It was an impressive description which the prophet gave of the kingdom of Israel, when he said, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." Hosea vii. 9. Decay is always gradual, and in the case of bodily consumption singularly concealed from the subject of it. Equally deceptive is the spiritual consumption of the soul; and he who is on the very verge of death, in some cases knows not his danger. As it is with individuals, so it is also with churches: there may, to an unpractised eye, be the appearance of life and even health associated with the certain but insidious progress of dissolution. How many individuals and churches, too, are not only flattering *themselves* that they are in a flourishing condition, but imposing upon others with the same delusion. The place of worship may be commodious, elegant, and free from debt—the minister popular, and approved by his flock—the congregation large, respectable, and influential—the communicants numerous, and harmonious—the finances good, and even prosperous—the collections for public institutions liberal and regular—in short, there may be every mark of external prosperity, till the church flatters itself, and is flattered by others, into the idea of its being in a high state of spiritual health. It has "a name to live." But now examine its internal state—inquire into its condition as viewed by God—inspect the private conduct of its members, and ask for the accessions of such as shall be saved; and what a different aspect of things is seen then. How low is the spirit of devotion, as evinced by the neglect of the meetings for *social* prayer; by the omission in many households of *family* prayer, and by the heartless, perfunctory, and irregular manner in which it is maintained in others; and by the giving up, in numerous cases, of *private* prayer. How feeble is the attachment to evangelical doctrine, and how little relish is there for that truth which is the bread of life to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Talent,

talent is the demand; "We want eloquence, genius oratory," is the cry. Nothing will do without this, and almost anything will do with it. How prevalent is the spirit of the world in their social intercourse. Routs and parties, differing scarcely anything from the fashionable circles of the worldly and the gay, are kept up at much expense, and with every accompaniment of frivolity and levity. Let a stranger, of devotional taste, and spiritual affection, and tenderness of conscience, enter into the families and frequent the parties of such a congregation, and what a destitution would he find of the vitality of religion. Under the deceptive appearance of a large and flourishing assembly, an eloquent preacher, and an air of general respectability and satisfaction on a Sabbath day in the sanctuary, what a deadness of the heart would he find; what a prevailing worldliness in the houses of professors. How many modern churches answer to the condition of that of Sardis. Here is the precise danger to which, above most others, we of this age are exposed, especially the large and externally flourishing churches, in the metropolis and the provincial towns. Oh, let us all, and especially those who are most in danger of coming into, or are already in, this deceptive condition, examine ourselves before God. Let us look beneath the illusive covering of an external prosperity, and examine whether disease and decay are lurking underneath.

PHILADELPHIA, CHAP. III. 7.

"Unto the church in Philadelphia write. Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

This is one of the seven churches of which no com-

plaint is made, and to which no language of censure is addressed. We should judge they were not distinguished by opulence, but what is infinitely preferable, by piety. They were tried by severe persecution, but they kept the word of Christ's patience, and though but feeble as to all that constituted worldly power, and not very strong in numbers, they still maintained their steadfastness, and kept their hold upon the truth with a martyr's grasp. It would seem they had been much tried by the seed of Abraham, who, having rejected the true Messiah, were no longer worthy the name of Jews. Amidst all opposition and discouragement they were exhorted still to persevere, by the assurance that they should be aided by Divine help in their religious profession, and that even their persecutors should be compelled to do them honor.

The lesson to be gathered from the history of this church is—*that eminent piety, and especially immovable steadfastness in the face of opposition and persecution, is the way to honor.*

There are many intimations scattered through the Word of God, that the church is destined to high distinction in the earth, and to receive a tribute of respect and honor from the nations. The prophecies are full of the most glowing descriptions of this kind; and why has she not yet received this promised tribute of respect? Just because she has not fulfilled the condition on which it is to be granted, and that is, eminent and consistent piety. When she shall be beheld as the tabernacle of God with men, and as having the glory of God; when she shall rise from the dust, and put on her beautiful garments; when she shall be radiant with the light of heaven, and be adorned with all the beauties of holiness, then shall she be as a "crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God." — "Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."

As yet the church, so far from gaining that honor and esteem which are so often referred to, and so divinely

promised, has been too much an object of contempt and derision; not that God has failed in his promise, but she has failed in the terms upon which alone she can expect to be esteemed. Religion has not yet generally appeared in that sublime majesty, that heavenly glory, that spotless purity, and that effective beneficence, which alone can command the reverence of mankind. Let her be only seen as a seraph from the skies, pure, benevolent, and consistent, — an image of God, — and then, though she may be too holy for the carnal heart to love, she will still command respect and admiration. Men will not turn from her with disgust and aversion, as from a spirit of falsehood and mischief; they will not insult and despise her, but will consider it as a species of profanity to treat her with rudeness and scorn. It is the feeble, distorted, and crippled form in which she has too generally appeared, the worldliness of her spirit, so strangely contrasted with the heavenliness of her profession; the loftiness of her pretensions, with the lowness of her practice; the extent of her claims, with the insignificance of her deserts, that has brought upon her the contumely and derision which it has been hitherto her lot to receive.

Who ever saw or heard of a Christian, who united in his character all the beneficent, righteous, and gentle virtues of the gospel profession; whose very name was a guarantee for whatsoever things are pure, just, honest, true, lovely, and of good report; who added to his faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity — where, and when, did such a character exist, or one approaching reasonably to such a standard, and not receive the respect even of his enemies, if he had any? God will compel men to do him homage. He will bring his foes to his feet, and make them feel how he is honored of God, and “how awful goodness is.” Yes, the greatest persecutors have sometimes paid involuntary homage to eminent and consistent piety, and in every age, and every country, exalted goodness has extorted confessions of respect, even where it has not conciliated affection. It is the exhibition of this eminent piety which, when presented to the world,

shall soften prejudice, disarm opposition, abate malignity, and prepare mankind more fully and generally than they have ever yet been, for the reception of the truth of God.

LAODICEA, CHAP. III. 14.

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot ; I would thou wert cold or hot. So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see.”

Of this city, frequent mention is made in the New Testament, as the seat of a Christian church of some celebrity among the primitive communities of believers. It is pretty evident from the epistle we are now considering, that it was considerable for the number and wealth of its members. Religion rarely thrives amidst much worldly prosperity. Our Lord's words contained a truth which observation and experience unite to confirm. “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Exceptions doubtless there are, but they are only exceptions. We have known professors of religion the better for adversity, but who ever knew one the better for prosperity ? If such a case ever occurs, is it not regarded as a prodigy of grace ? On the contrary, how many have we known, whose piety has declined as their wealth increased ; and even where religion has not totally disappeared, amidst accumulating opulence, it has retained only the form or shadow of what it once was. Multitudes in eternity will regard their money as their curse ; so says the apostle. “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdi-

tion." 1 Tim. vi. 9. Yes, it is the bag of gold that drags down the soul of rich men into the pit. The love of money is the cause of more souls being lost than any other in all Christendom. Hence rich churches are rarely eminent for vital godliness. The spiritual state of the church at Laodicea verifies this remark. They were as poor in religion as they were affluent in worldly wealth. They *boasted* of their prosperity, *saying*, "I am rich." It was their matter of glorying; they vaunted and were puffed up, for wealth generates pride, and fosters vanity, beyond anything else. There is more *purse-pride* in existence than of any other kind of pride, just because nothing gives a man more consequence in general society than wealth.

And what, all the while, was the spiritual state of this church? There is not a syllable mentioned in the way of commendation; they had not grace enough to furnish the Saviour, inquisitive as he was for something to praise, with matter for one note of approbation. The specific charge which he brought against them was *lukewarmness*, that middle state between heat and cold. Some professors are ardent almost to an enthusiasm of zeal; others cold to the absolute extinction of all vital heat; the one *all* religion, the other *no religion at all*; but the Laodiceans were neither the one nor the other; they had no fire, yet they were not ice; they had no decided piety, yet would not leave religion alone; they would not throw off the profession and forms of godliness, yet knew nothing of its power. This state of mind was peculiarly offensive to Christ. To halt between God and the world, truth and error, holiness and sin, is worse, in some respects, and in some persons, than to be openly irreligious. Corrupt Christianity is more offensive to God than open infidelity. No man thinks the worse of religion for what he sees in the openly profane, but it is far otherwise with respect to religious professors. If he that nameth the name of Christ depart not from iniquity, the honor of Christ is affected by his conduct. Therefore Christ seemed to say, "Be one thing or the other. Have more religion or less; act more consistently, or let religion alone altogether."

Yet the church, though in this deplorable state, was not aware of its condition, but thought all was going on well; it did not know that it was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." This is surprising and affecting, and shows, in an alarming view, how far self-deception may be carried, especially in the case of those, who, like the members of the church at Laodicea, are much taken up with the enjoyment of worldly prosperity. Let a professor of religion have his mind much occupied with the cares of business, and his affections much engrossed with the objects of sense, and it is astonishing how ignorant and mistaken he may remain as to the real state of his soul. Prosperity is the smoothest, easiest, and most unsuspected road to the bottomless pit.

The lesson to be learnt from the condition of *this* church is too obvious to be mistaken or doubted, and too impressive to be unfelt or unheeded; it is this, *lukewarmness in a Christian church is a state peculiarly offensive to Christ; a state which may exist without being properly known or seriously suspected; and which is very likely to be produced by worldly prosperity.* There stands the awful beacon, and will stand to the end of time, of this corrupt community, warning all the churches of God against a state which is as ruinous to themselves as it is displeasing, yea disgusting, to him. It is a record which every community of Christians should frequently read with most solemn awe; and it is a record which it especially becomes the churches of our age and country to peruse, since in these days and in this country of liberty, commerce, wealth and ease, the danger of sinking into this condition is most imminent. Sardis and Laodicea, it may be feared, furnish the types of many of the churches of this age. We can conceive, and perhaps describe, one of these Laodicean professors. By some means or other, either by an alarming illness, the death of a near relative, or an impressive sermon, his mind has become a little interested in the subject of religion; but his knowledge of its nature was never very clear, nor his conviction of sin ever very deep, nor his sense of the

need of a Saviour ever very pungent ; but still his views were sufficiently correct, sustained as they were by a good moral character, to gain him access to the fellowship of the church, and the table of the Lord. The object of his solicitude having been gained, he soon loses what little real solicitude he once possessed, and though he does not abandon the forms of godliness, is evidently a stranger to its power. He is perhaps engaged in a prosperous trade, the profits of which accumulate and enable him to command the elegances and the luxuries of fashionable life, or at any rate the substantial comforts of a competent fortune. He is now taken up almost exclusively with business, and worldly enjoyment. All spirituality is evaporated from his mind ; religion, as a source of personal enjoyment, a fount of real bliss, an object of experimental interest, has ceased. Private prayer is given up, or confined to a few hurried and heartless expressions uttered on retiring to rest, or rising hastily from it. As to communion with God, if he ever knew it, he has lost it. His family prayers are irregular, formal, or totally relinquished. His family are brought up almost without the least care or anxiety for the formation of their religious character, for he has married a woman without decided religion, and who is one with him in all his worldly habits. There is taste, elegance, fashion, amusement, in his house, but the stranger who visits him neither sees nor hears anything of religion. All is gayety in the way of parties and entertainments. On the Sabbath he goes regularly once, perhaps twice, to public worship ; that is, his body is there, for his thoughts are on his business, his wealth, or his pleasure. The prayers kindle no devotion, the sermon yields no religious enjoyment. To ordinary religious truth, however rich and full the exhibition of fundamental gospel doctrine, he is quite insensible, though upon an extraordinary display of pulpit eloquence, by some gifted preacher, he bestows both attention and eulogium. He is an admirer of talent, and is gratified by its displays. He is found, also, at the Lord's table ; but though Jesus Christ is there evidently set forth, crucified before him, his heart never melts with penitence, nor glows with love,

nor experiences the peace of believing. As to the weekly meetings for prayer or preaching, these have been entirely given up; nor does he take any interest in the affairs of the church, or the usefulness and comfort of the pastor. His love of the world, unsubdued by faith, makes him in his business, sharp, eager, overreaching, so as to make others complain of him, suspect him, and reproach him. In his temper he is perhaps passionate, implacable, and litigious. Yet all this while he is a professor of religion, a member of a Christian church, and known to be such. He does not cast off his religion, or rather his profession of it, but he retains it only to dishonor it. Now this is lukewarmness, and it is a representation which in various degrees suits thousands and thousands of the members of all denominations at the present day. Such members are to be found in all our churches, corrupting the communion, grieving the pastor, discrediting religion, deceiving themselves, and offending Christ. There may be no foul blots, no great scandals, no grievous falls, which call for excommunication; these but rarely occur, and are not after all the chief source of discredit to religion, and of hindrance to its extension; it is lukewarmness, that slothlike vice, which deteriorates its nature, degrades its dignity, rendering it a low and reptile thing, and which by its extensive prevalence, not only destroys the souls of those who are subject to it, but spreads the odious infection far and wide.

What renders it the more alarming is that the lukewarm are not sufficiently, or not at all, aware of their own destitute and miserable condition. Having dwelt on this in considering the state of the church at Sardis, which very nearly resembles that of Laodicea, it is unnecessary to enlarge upon it here.

Having, with as much brevity as I could employ, thus exhibited the contents of these instructive and impressive addresses, I would once more, before I go on to other parts of this work, commend with all the earnestness I can express, the perusal of them to the churches of our day. In no part of Scripture shall we find a clearer statement of what, as regards the *spiritual* condition of

a church, Christ requires of his people. Nowhere shall we find a more correct standard by which to examine our condition, or a more intelligible rule by which to guide our conduct. If, in the epistles of Paul, and Peter, and James, and in the other epistles of John, we find a more expanded view of Christian doctrine and morality, we find here, more than in almost any other part of the Word of God, that which turns our attention inward upon the state of spiritual life in the church. Here are disclosed to us those *heart-diseases*, so to speak, which may be impairing the health, and imperiling the very life, of a Christian community, and which may be carrying on the work of destruction almost without being suspected. No part of the word of God deserves more of the attention of the pastorate of this day, than this which we have been now considering. No minister can do a better service to his church, and to his age, than by an able, faithful, and practical exposition of these important addresses. By God's blessing upon such a service, the church must be the better for it, when it has been well and diligently performed. Nor should it be felt as an objection to such a labor, that the other parts of this mysterious book are not yet clearly understood, and that as this is a part of the whole, to touch this without going on, is but a fragmentary work. In reply, it may be said, that these letters are each complete in itself, as much so as Paul's epistles, and furnishes lessons distinct, separate, and important, though no other part be handled. Here are instructions of momentous consequence to be attended to, and which may be understood, though the seals, the vials, and the trumpets, now covered with a cloud of hieroglyphics, which perhaps nothing but futurity will ever disclose, should remain unintelligible to the most sagacious expositor. To explore this rich vein of divine truth requires no great skill in spiritual mining. No surer or better method can be taken to obtain an earnest church than a general disposition in ministers to endeavor to fix the attention of their flocks upon these epistles to the seven churches which were in Asia.

CHAPTER III.

NATURE OF EARNESTNESS, VIEWED WITH REFERENCE TO INDIVIDUAL ACTION, AND PRIMARILY AS REGARDS PERSONAL RELIGION.

THE first and most important concern of the church of Christ is its own internal spiritual condition. Its care and solicitude must commence with laborious efforts for its own improvement. It must be turned inwards upon its own state before it seeks to employ itself for the good of others. As God's instrument for the conversion of the world, it must be fitted for its work, and become a vessel fit for the Master's use. Its zeal must not be a thing separate from its piety, but a part of it; not even a foreign graft upon the stock, but a branch growing out of it, the putting forth of its own living principle, and an activity sustained by its own internal vigor. No other zeal will live long, or be very successful while it lives; any other will be only an excrescence or a parasite. The church cannot be an earnest one, in the true sense of the term, without being in a high, or at least in a healthy, state of spiritual religion within itself.

The more active it is in the way of proselyting, the more devoted it should be in the way of piety. Without this, even the present missionary ardor, instead of being as the light-house of the world, will be but as a bonfire upon the heights of Zion, a transient blaze, which will soon burn itself out, but which will yield no permanent illumination. Here then must be our starting point; to begin anywhere else is to begin in the middle. It is one of Satan's deep devices to call off the attention of the church from its own state, to the condition of the world without and around her. He cares but little for the efforts of a feeble church, or a lukewarm mind. He

fears more from the attacks of a single troop of determined heroes, than from an army of timid, half-hearted, and untrained soldiers. We must take care, therefore, not to look away from ourselves. Ministers must be watchful of the state of their churches to keep up an intense piety there, and the churches must enter into thus the design of their pastors. The army that would invade and conquer the world must itself be in a good state of discipline, courage, arms, and personal health.

We bring forward the remark we have already applied to the work of bearing testimony, and of evangelization, to apply it to the subject of this chapter; and it is a remark of so much importance, and so liable to be forgotten, that it will be kept before the reader through the whole of this volume. There are some views so important, that in reference to them tautology is not only justifiable, but an excellence — and this concerning individuality is one of them. The earnest piety of the church consists of the earnest piety of its individual members. No illusion is more common, both in civil and sacred things, than for membership to weaken the sense of responsibility, and even to cause an oblivion of individuality. There can be joint action, but no joint piety or conscience. There are many things a man cannot do without the coöperation of others, but religion is not of this number. All its obligations, all its duties, all its privileges, belong to man as an individual, with the exception of the duties of *social* worship. The piety of a community is made up of the piety of its individual members: there being just as much religion in the whole as there is in all its separate parts, and no more. But we forget this. We talk of the religion of *the church*, the duty of *the church*, forgetting that this means our individual duty, our personal religion. What we mean, then, in this volume, is the intense devotion, the spiritual earnestness, of each professing Christian; and what we aim at is to prevent each individual from looking away from himself to the body of which he is a member, and to compel him to look upon *himself*. Whatever is required in the way of more consecration to God,

more religion is required of *you*, each one of *you*, who shall read these pages. Do not satisfy yourself by thinking or saying that *the church* must be in earnest; but say to yourself, "I must be in earnest, for I am a part of the church." It is another of Satan's deep devices to keep the eye and mind of individual members directed away from themselves, and fixed upon the body. He will allow us to utter what lamentations, and to make what resolutions, we please concerning the whole, as long as we keep away from ourselves as parts of the whole. It is *individualism* he fears, more than catholicism.

Our idea of the nature of earnest individual piety must be taken, not from the conventional standard of the age, but from the Word of God. It is of immense importance to bear this in recollection, and to admit its truth. It must be so, whether we admit it or no. Once give up the Bible as the only true standard of personal religion, and there is no rule left but custom, which is ever varying with the opinions and corruptions of the times. On this principle all but the very lowest stages of apostasy might be justified, for they were the conventional notions of their day. No, the Bible, the Bible alone, is the religion of Christians. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not, and act not, according to them, it is because there is no light in them." Yet how prevalent is the disposition to conform ourselves to the prevailing religion of the day and of the church to which we belong, and to satisfy ourselves with the average measure of piety around us. "I am as good as my neighbors," is the shield with which many a man repels the charge of deficiency. "I am as good as my fellow-members," is the self-same shield with which a professor of religion wards off the allegation of his being below his duty. The very same conventionalism which ruins the world, corrupts the church. That which keeps down the standard of morality in the one, depresses the standard of piety in the other. This has been the fatal practical error of the church through every age of its existence, and by which its beauty has been disfigured, its power weakened, and its usefulness impeded: its

members, instead of looking into the perfect law of Scripture, and seeing themselves reflected from that faithful mirror, and adjusting their character and conduct by its infallible revelations, have placed before themselves the glass of the Christian profession as it was found in the church of the day, and have regulated their behavior by what they saw in the prevailing character of their fellow-Christians. Thus a constant multiplication of corrupted copies is going on, and religion as seen in the conduct of its professors, and as it is described in the pages of its own inspired rule, are quite different things. Hence the necessity of occasionally bringing under review, in a condensed form, the testimony of Scripture on the nature of earnest religion.

FIRST. What, then, says the Bible in answer to this question, "What is earnest piety?"

Perhaps, after what has been said in our remarks upon the epistles to the seven churches in Asia, this is almost unnecessary; but the scattered illustrations presented in those beautiful addresses may be brought into a collected form, and if this does not show at once the nature and necessity of earnestness in religion, nothing can.

1. Consider the general design of religion, so far as man is concerned: now this is summed up in that one word, *salvation* — the salvation of the soul — the great salvation — the common salvation — the salvation of man's immortal soul from sin, from death, from hell, to pardon, holiness, peace, and heaven, and all this for eternity. What a word! Salvation! What ideas, — heaven, hell, eternity! Eternal existence, with everything that can make that existence happy. Here is our situation; life is a probation and a discipline for eternity. We are here to obtain salvation, to enjoy its first fruits, and to meeten for the full possession. And now just glance at the representation of the state of mind which the Scripture represents as in those who are pursuing this salvation, and in reference to it. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," i. e., let this be the object of your most intense desire, most eager, constant and persevering pursuit, so that everything else

shall be brought into subordination to it. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," i. e., "Our eye is constantly upon eternity. We see all things in their relations to this, and can scarcely see anything else. We regulate all our conduct by a regard to eternity. We are so little affected by temporal things that they seem scarcely to exist, while heavenly and eternal things seem to be the only realities." *This is earnestness.*

2. Consider the scriptural representation of the particular branches of true religion.

—Take piety towards God.

Religion in man, who is a sinner, must of course include *conviction of sin*, true penitence, and ingenuous confession: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart." What an expression, a broken heart! how comprehensive, how emphatic! What a sense of sin is included in that one striking phrase, "a broken heart!"

—What a conspicuous place in religion does *faith* bear! How it runs through the whole texture of the New Testament, as the silken cord which binds all parts of our religion! "We are justified by faith—we live by faith—we work by faith." Now faith is not mere opinion, a mere hearsay assent, an hereditary educational notion; but a conviction, a mental grasp, a martyr's hold upon the gospel of salvation; a living upon Christ, upon heaven, and for eternity.

—Then there is *love*; not a loving in word only, but in deed and in truth. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." "The love of Christ constraineth us;" i. e., bears us away with the force of a torrent. What an intensity of emotion do these words imply! A love that fills up all the intellect, and all the heart, and all the life.

—Faith, where it is real, brings *peace* and *joy*; for if there be no peace there can be no faith, and there will be

as much peace as there is of faith ; hence we read that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, even a peace that passeth understanding, a joy unspeakable and full of glory : a joy which continues even when we are in manifold trials.

— True religion inspires an ardor of *devotion*. How intense were the breathings of the Psalmist's sou after God ! How his very heart seemed to glow, and burn, and melt with devotion ! And the apostle also, in describing our duty, says, " We are to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

— The piety of the New Testament necessarily induces a *deep-toned spirituality*. " To be spiritually minded, is life and peace." By this we are to understand a spontaneous, prevailing, and delightful propensity to meditate on divine truth, and holy things ; and allied to this is *heavenly-mindedness*, or an habitual tendency to dwell on the glory to be revealed. We are " to be risen with Christ," and to " seek those things which are above ; setting our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God ;" we are to be waiting for the Son of God from heaven, and to be looking for his coming as our blessed hope, above all other hopes. This waiting for Christ was in an eminent degree characteristic of the primitive Christians ; it is frequently mentioned by the apostles, and seems to have been a prevailing feeling of the churches ; and all earnest Christians now have the same spirit. The bride, the Lamb's wife, is, and must be supposed to be, ever looking for the return of the heavenly Bridegroom. The want of this habitual looking for the return of Christ indicates a low state of piety, a prevalence of worldly-mindedness among professing Christians.

— True religion includes a *subjugation of the world* : " This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." " If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." " Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." How strong an expression, " Ye are dead !" Dead to sin — dead to the world — to

things seen and temporal—a corpse amidst all these matters!

—There is in the Lord's people a *hungering and thirsting after righteousness*. Do we consider how craving an appetite is hungering after food, and thirst after water? So are we to long and pant for holiness.

—If there be earnest piety there must of necessity be a *spirit of prayer*. We are to be “instant in prayer,”—“to pray always,”—“to pray always with *all* prayer,”—to be importunate in prayer—to enter into our closet—to pray with the family, and to join in public prayer. Our whole life is to be in one sense a continued devotional exercise.

—Religion implies habitual, minute, and anxious *conscientiousness*. Having in all things “a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man,” and “avoiding even the appearance of evil.”

—Earnest piety requires a constant, diligent, and spiritual *attendance upon all the prescribed means of grace*—the holy observance of the Sabbath, the assembling of ourselves together for public worship, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the devout reading of the Word of God.

—To sum up all, if we are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, we shall endeavor to comply with the apostle's exhortation where he saith, “Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” And we shall copy his example in that description of *his* end of life where he says, “For me to live is Christ.”

But there is another branch of true religion: God has taken under his protection, sanction, and enforcement, all the interests of our fellow-creatures: and it is therefore as much a part of our business to promote these, as it is to practise the duties of piety towards God.

—How large and prominent a place does *charity*, or love, bear in our Christian obligations! “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up: doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but

rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things." How beautiful a virtue, but how difficult ! This is what our Lord enjoins where he commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves : a disposition which means that we are to do nothing to produce the misery, and everything to promote the happiness, of our fellow-creatures.

— As a branch of this we are to be *merciful*, tender-hearted, sympathizing, and full of practical compassion. — Nor are we to stop here, but are to follow " whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." So that the most refined morality is a necessary part of true religion.

If we are earnest in religion, we shall aim to let its power regulate, and its beauty adorn, all our *social relationships*, and all that is to be done in the state, and in the family, will be performed under its influence.

And because motives have much to do with actions, and contain all in them that is moral, and because thoughts and feelings are the seeds of actions, a man who is earnest in religion will pay most assiduous attention to the *state of his mind* : will watch the heart with all diligence ; will often scrutinize his soul, and will crucify the affections and lusts of his corrupt nature.

Nor must he stop here, for, knowing his own weakness, he will pray, wrestle, and agonize, for the power of the Spirit to help his infirmities. He must have grace, or he will fall. He cries to God in fervor and faith for the aid without which he cannot take a step, and will gladly place himself under the teaching and guidance of this ever-present, all-sufficient Agent.

Such is a condensed view of the Scripture account of true religion. If anything more than this were required to set forth the necessity of earnestness, we must refer to the figures under which the divine life is exhibited in the Word of God. It is a *race*—what preparation, what laying aside of encumbrances, what intense solicitude, and what strenuous exertion, are *here* implied ! It

is a *conflict*, a fight of faith — what anxiety, what peril, what skill, what courage, what struggling, are included in the strife of the battle-field! It is a *warfare* — what self-denial, what perseverance, what labor, are required for such a journey!

It is impossible not to be struck, in reading such an account, with the idea that here is something more than a round of ceremonies, a course of physical exertion, a routine of mechanical action. This is not a mere repetition of prayers, and counting of beads, and holding of vigils, which are all a mere bodily service; no, what is here laid down is a reasonable service, a course of action for the intellect, the will, the heart, the conscience, and all the more difficult for being mental: calling for reflection, determination, resolute purpose, and resistance of opposition.

This, be it recollected, is not man's device, but God's prescription. It is not what the ministers of the gospel have determined upon, but what God has set before us. Whether we like it or not, there it is, every sentiment of it drawn from the Bible. We may complain of it as being too strict, but this must be settled with God, since it is no stricter than he has thought fit to make it. Let us read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. Let us set it before us. Let us turn away from the religion we see in the church, to the religion we read in the Bible. Let us not listen to what *man* says is necessary, but to what *God* says is necessary. Let us go for our information, not to the imperfect and blurred copy in the ordinary profession, but to the perfect and unspotted original.

SECONDLY. A question, however, will now suggest itself to some minds, "*Is this our standard? Is this representation of the nature of true piety intended for us as our guide, and is it obligatory upon us? Strange that such a question should be asked. Is the Bible ours, and given for us, and are its contents binding upon us, as they were on those who first received it from the hand of God? Who among professing Christians ever doubted it, except some few modern semi-infidels, who tell us the Bible was a very good book, and Jesus Christ a very*

good teacher for the earlier times of Christianity, but that, in the progress of reason, and the advance of science and civilization, both may be dispensed with. But we have not so learned Christ. *We profess* to believe that the inspired volume, like its Divine Author, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;" unalterable in its meaning, in its adaptation, in its authority. The Scriptures were written for all times, and all countries, and are alike obligatory upon all. We are as much bound by Paul's epistles as were the churches to which they were originally addressed. There, in those blessed pages, is the description of *our* religion, both in its privileges and its duties. There are potent, but they will prove abortive, efforts to substitute something else for all this. It is too spiritual, too devout, too unearthly, too self-denying, too humbling, for many; and it must be pushed out for man's device; and this is done in two ways, and by two different classes of teachers. One class are endeavoring to set aside the prescriptions of the New Testament, by a philosophized Christianity, which retains the name, but repudiates everything else of this divine system. This is intended for the thoughtful and scientific, who cannot quite do without some reference to God and immortality, but who cannot endure anything so humbling to reason, and so mortifying to depravity, as the New Testament description of religion. While, on the other hand, there are the men who are governed by their senses and their imagination, for whom all this which has been set forth is too spiritual, and intellectual, and moral; and they, therefore, must have a ceremonial and ritual piety. They must dwell in the regions of poetry, and architecture, and sculpture; and be regaled by sights and sounds which shall supply them with the luxuries of taste, without any very large demand upon the understanding, the will, the heart, and the conscience. Against both these the Word of God lifts up its own inspired, unalterable, and infallible standard, and with the authority of a Divine voice says, "*This is the way, walk ye in it.*" Yes this, all this, which we find in the Scriptures of the New Testament as descriptive of the religion of Jesus Christ,

is binding upon us. Every particular enumerated is binding upon every individual Christian. There can be no dividing the religion of the Bible ; no parcelling it out amidst various individuals ; no giving piety to one, and morality to another ; no leaving one man to do this, to the neglect of that, and allowing another man to do what his fellow-professor has neglected, and to neglect what he has done ; it is all binding upon each. The whole moral law, and the whole gospel of the grace of God, come down with undiminished and undivided weight upon each man's conscience.

Now it is not enough to say, "Who then can be saved?" and endeavor to get rid of our obligations by affirming that such a life as this is impossible to any one in this world. This has been often said, and an infidel objection has been raised against the gospel, on the ground of its high standard of duty. It has been alleged against it, that its requirements are beyond the reach of any one situated as we are, with a corrupt nature, and surrounded by temptations. There would be some force in this, if nothing were accepted short of absolute perfection. Difficult, indeed, it is, so much so, that even "the righteous are scarcely saved." But is it more difficult for us than it was for the first Christians? They were surrounded by idolatrous friends, customs, and rites, and had to force their way to heaven through bonds, imprisonment, and death, in addition to all that is trying to us. They could not move a step in their religious course without encountering an antagonism of which we can form no conception. Yet even to them no concession was made ; "Deny thyself, and take up thy cross and follow me," was the stern, unbending demand of Christ. He required of them, and he requires of us, also, the double crucifixion, of the outer and the inner man, as the terms of discipleship.

This, I admit, is somewhat alarming ; it is, indeed, startling, and enough to awaken all Christendom to very serious consideration, to be told that this is the religion they must have, or abandon their pretension to religion

altogether. Can anything more clearly prove the necessity of earnestness than such a statement as this?

THIRDLY. We may now proceed to ask, *whether this is the religion which is prevalent in this day, and among us?* This is a question which we approach with trembling solicitude, anxious not to give a wrong answer, neither on the one hand to exaggerate, nor, on the other, to underrate, the piety of this age. Recollect, the question is not whether we have more or less earnest piety than some former ages. No doubt there have been times when there was a more intense devotion than ours, and other times when there was less. There can be little doubt that the number of true Christians is greater now than it has been in any modern age, and as little, that in some directions, this number is still greatly augmenting. We are disposed, therefore, to drop this inquiry, and take up the question of the present state of piety as viewed only in comparison with the standard laid down before. Even could it be shown that we were somewhat more in earnest than others that have gone before us, yet how far short are we, both of what the word of God requires, and of what is necessary for our high duty and destiny, as God's witnessing and proselyting church.

We would not lose sight, and ought not to do so, of certain distinguishing and lofty features in the church's piety of this day. There is, no doubt, a very prevailing disposition to profess Christ. Religion is unquestionably gaining ground in this respect. Whatever disposition there may be in some quarters, that is, among the second-rate men of science, and also among great numbers of the operative classes, to espouse the cause of infidelity, — and a fearful disposition there is to do so, — public opinion is in other quarters conciliated to religion, and even to evangelical religion. But we are not now so much thinking of the characteristics of the age, as of the church: and of this latter, we find a noble distinction in its liberal, yea, munificent activity. Never, no, never, since the days of the apostles, was there such a pervading spirit of religious zeal as there is now: nor would we be over curious and severe in our scrutiny to ascer-

tain how much of this is tainted with sectarianism ; that it is not all pure, we admit, but whatever alloy may be mixed with it, much of it is genuine gold. It is a sight for the admiration of angels, and on which the great God himself looks down with ineffable complacency, to see the church rising up from the slumber of ages, multiplying her instruments, and accumulating her means, for the world's conversion. See her efforts at home for the building of churches, the training of ministers, the erection of schools, the preaching of the gospel, and the education of the people : and see her, at the same time, on both sides of the Atlantic, stretching out her arms half round the globe, and, by her missionaries and mission stations, giving the blessings of salvation to half the teeming population of our earth. We would not be blind to this, for it is a glorious sight to see our merchants beginning to inscribe upon their merchandise, and upon the bells of the horses, "Holiness to the Lord!" Should some of the friends of Zion, who departed to their rest a century ago, look out of their graves upon the scenes exhibited in the metropolis in the month of May, they would be almost ready to conclude we had reached the millennial period of the world's history. Zeal is at length recognized as one of the constituent elements of piety, and that professor would be viewed as a relic of a by-gone age, who did not recognize *his* commission in the command of the Saviour, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

This is delightful, but it is not everything : there may be, as we have seen, a name to live while we are dead. It is impossible to be ignorant, or to forget, how much of all the money given may be bestowed without any real love to the object ; and how much of all the labor thus employed may be carried on from a mere love of activity, and by the strong current of public example. It is only necessary to look to the church of Rome, to learn how much of zeal may be manifested, and how much of property may be expended, without any pure religious motive. And even taking the gross amount of what is given, and what is done, without making any

deductions for the counterfeit coin of false motives, how little does it amount to, compared with what we spend upon ourselves, and with what the cause of Christ requires at our hands!

Giving, then, all that is due to this spirit of liberality and activity, let us come back to the question about the earnest *piety* of the age. Has the church so clothed herself with the garments of salvation and the robes of righteousness, and does she so shine with the beauties of holiness, and the reflected light of heaven falling upon her, as to attract the notice, to fix the attention, and excite the admiration of the world? Is she all brightness, a Goshen amidst Egyptian gloom, a verdant oasis in the midst of this moral desert? Has she, by her unearthly temper, her consistent holiness, her heavenly-mindedness; by her exalted morality, by her exemplary benevolence, by the radiance of truth sparkling in her eye, the spirit of love breathed from her lips, and the blessings of mercy dropping from her hands, silenced the cavils of infidelity, and answered the taunts of her enemies, "What do ye more than others?" Does she appear like the tabernacle of God, filled with his glory and indicating his presence? Have Christians, by their victory over the world, their constant and earnest pursuit of salvation, their consistent piety, their general excellence, their gentleness, meekness, and kindness, lived down the suspicion, and silenced the charge, of hypocrisy? Do we appear what we profess to be, as men living supremely for immortality, and bearing visibly to every eye the stamp of heaven and eternity upon our character? Do we look like the competitors for a crown of glory, the warriors fighting for eternal liberty and life? Does our religion appear like that which is making us a saint in life, and *would* make us a martyr in death? Can we pretend to be in earnest, if these questions must be answered in the negative?

If asked to point out the specific and prevailing sin of the church in the present day, we cannot hesitate in replying, *a pervading worldliness of mind, heart, and conduct*. She is fearfully secularized in the spirit and temper

of her members. The love of the world is become the master passion, before which other and holier affections grow dim and weak. Nor is this at all inconsistent with the spirit of liberality, which has been already admitted to exist. There may, by the force of circumstances, be a spirit of giving, where at the same time there may be an excessive anxiety about getting. In this commercial country, it is difficult even for the professors of religion to escape the contagious spirit of speculation, eager competition, and over-trading. The determination, as well as the anxiety, to be rich, will, without great watchfulness, rush into the church : it has done so, and those who profess to have overcome the world by faith, appear almost as eager as others in all the schemes for getting wealth in haste, and by almost any means. But it is not only in the way of doing business that this secular spirit is seen, but in the general habits and tastes of professing Christians. Their style of living, their entertainments, their associations, their amusements, their conversation, evince a conformity to the world, a minding of earthly things, a disposition to conform themselves to the world around, and an apparent desire to seek their happiness from objects of sense, rather than from those of faith, which prove the extent to which a secular spirit is bearing down the spirit of piety.

It may not be improper here to ask what are the principal *defects*, as well as sins, of the religion of this day ; in what it is that the professors of this age chiefly fall short ? Two only shall be mentioned, as perhaps the most prominent. I may first mention that class of duties which come under the head of the devotional, the spiritual, the contemplative, as distinguished from the active and practical, or that which is specifically known as piety towards God : the love of, and communion with, God ; looking to Jesus, and the habitual sense of his unutterable preciousness ; the commerce with the skies ; the abiding impression of eternity ; the impressive sense of the Divine presence ; the constant reference to the future state, which, like an invisible but powerful link, connects us with another world. This is what we want. the high-

toned spirituality, the deeply devotional spirit, the heavenly aspirations, the yearnings after a higher and holier state of existence, which are exhibited in many of the hymns we sing, many of the biographies we read, and many of the sermons we hear. We have a faith which converses with the letter, but we want one which presses on to the spirit, of the word of God : our faith stops in words, but does not reach on to things ; the awfully glorious form of truth passes before our intellect, but it is veiled and muffled ; we do not take hold of her garment, entreat her to smile upon us, and tarry with us, admitting our hearts to communion with her.

It has sometimes occurred to me that we have suffered our very orthodoxy, in one respect, to do us harm, as if the doctrine of justification by faith, that fundamental truth, and the only legitimate source of peace to a sinner's conscience, were intended to chill our affections, and extinguish the exercise of a holy and chastened imagination in the soul of a saint. In setting aside frames and feelings as grounds of hope and sources of peace, we have been in danger of extinguishing them altogether as exercises of devotion. In doing honor to the work of Christ, as the sole ground of acceptance with God, we have neglected the work of the Spirit to raise us unto the element of light and love. In turning with aversion from the crucifix as an aid to devotion, we have neglected to use the cross to produce in us all the legitimate emotions of earnest contemplation. In refusing to enter the cloister, we have neglected also the closet. In repudiating the visions, the raptures, and the dreamy silence of the mystics, we have also let go the peace that passeth understanding, the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. In surrendering such books as Madame Guion's rapturous hymns, Mrs. Rowe's Devout Exercises of the Heart, Hervey's Meditations, and Law's Serious Call, we have at the same time renounced almost all other works, which, though of a more sober spirit of devotion, are intended and calculated to excite and sustain religious affection. We have repudiated manuals of devotion, which prescribe employments for passion-week, a whole

week's preparation for the Lord's supper, prayers to be repeated in dressing and undressing, and all the various situations in which we can be found, as tending to make religion a thing of and by itself, as belonging to times and places, but not constituting an element of habitual character, and a principle designed to influence us always, everywhere, and in everything: but have we not too much abandoned all aids to devotion, all means and helps to keep up the piety of the heart towards God. Missals, breviaries, and rosaries, are abjured by us as the inventions of man, the devices of superstition, the mockeries of devotion; but do we substitute them by our Bibles, our hymn-books, our religious biographies, as closet companions, as fuel for the flame of devotion? We doubt the genuineness of that emotion which can be excited only by Gothic architecture, beautiful sculpture, sublime music, and mouldering ruins of religious fabrics; but do we take pains to nourish devotion by the appeals made to our senses, in the scenes of nature, and the legitimate symbols of our holy religion? In short, we have abjured Popery, and its late-born child, Puseyism, but we still want the devotion of some of the best of their votaries, purified from its superstition, illuminated and guided by the clear light of the evangelical system of revealed truth,—the piety of Fenelon and Pascal, as a graft upon the doctrine of justification by faith, or rather yielded by it as its legitimate produce. Such instances there are among us, not a few; would God they were more numerous!

But, "this kind goeth not forth but by fasting and prayer," and in the former of these, if not in the latter, the Christians of the present day are singularly wanting. We live in a busy age, when men find little time for private prayer, reading the Scriptures, and meditation. Perhaps there was never so little private prayer among professors as there is now. The closet was never more neglected by the great bulk of those who call themselves Christians. A few hasty expressions or a few broken thoughts, poured out without solemnity or without coherence, or else a short form learnt by heart, and repeated

at night or morning, or perhaps both, constitutes, it is to be feared, as we have already said, all the private prayer which some offer to God. Closet prayer means a person's selecting some suitable time and place to be alone with God, to pour out into his ear, with freedom and enlargement, all the cares, the sorrows, the desires, and the sins of a burdened heart, and a troubled conscience : it means more, for it signifies the act of a child going to commune in the spirit of adoption with his Divine Parent, and to give utterance to the expressions of his adoring gratitude, praise, and love, and to present his intercessions for all that claim an interest in his supplications. It is but too obvious that there is comparatively little of such closet exercises in this day of engrossing worldliness. Christians live too much in public to be much in their closets. Answer, ye who read these pages, is it not so? What say *your* closets and consciences? What testimony is borne for *you*? Say, professors, say, if you are not restraining prayer, and framing all kinds of excuses for the neglect? What spirituality, what heavenly-mindedness, can you expect in the habitual neglect of the closet?

But this is not the only deficiency of the church in the present day, for the want of a prevailing *conscientiousness* is as conspicuous as that on which we have just dwelt. Earnestness in religion is as much displayed in a sincere and anxious desire in all things to do what is right, as it is in praying, and cultivating the spirit of devotion. And this is, perhaps, much easier to be manifested than the other. There are great numbers of God's people, who are so situated that they cannot command much time for devotional exercises : their hours are not their own ; but every one can be conscientious in his conduct. It requires no more time, though, in some cases, much more resolution, to do right, than to do wrong. In a trading country, like ours, where competition is so keen, and success so precarious, the temptations to a violation of the " whatsoever things are just, honest, true, and lovely," will be very numerous, very strong, and constantly recurring. Trade affords constant tests of principle. It

supplies the standard of honor with men of business. But dishonorable transactions are no uncommon occurrences among professors of the present day. More scandals are brought upon the cause of Christ from this source, than from any other that could be named. A want of strict and eminent integrity is so common, that the manifestation of it, in any high degree, excites admiration, and insures for its possessor unusual testimonies of commendation.

It is not meant by this to avow, or insinuate, that almost all professors are dishonest men, but merely that in little affairs of a pecuniary nature, and other matters, violations of the honorable and generous are so common, as to excite less surprise and censure than they should do, in one who professes to be in earnest for the kingdom of God. What Paley said in reference to subscription to articles of faith, "that he could not afford to keep a conscience," is said by multitudes besides, or if not said, is acted upon. A man, who in all his actions, his words, and feelings; in all his conduct which is seen only by God, as well as in that which comes under the cognizance of men; when it exposes him to inconvenience and loss, as well as when it puts him to no cost, and calls for no shame, makes an enlightened and tender conscience his guide, and which he implicitly obeys, is a character too rare even among professors of religion. To adopt as the rule of conduct, "I will in all things do that which my Bible and my conscience tell me is right;" and to carry this rule into all the great branches and minute ramifications of Christian duty; to adopt it in reference to our temper and spirit, our thoughts and feelings, as well as our words and actions; to make it govern us in all our social relations, and all our business transactions; and, in conformity to this rule, to make any sacrifice, to practise any self-denial, and to endure any loss, is a line of conduct, which, though imperatively demanded by religion, is but too seldom seen, but wherever it is seen can never fail to be admired.

It appears quite clear, then, that great numbers of Christian professors are but very imperfectly acquainted

with the requirements of "pure and undefiled religion," and need to be led to re-study it in the pages of Holy Scripture. We have lost sight of the Divine Original, and have confined our attention to the imperfect transcripts which we find on every hand. We have by tacit consent lowered the standard, and fixed our eye and our aim upon this depreciated rule. We are a law to each other, instead of making the Word of God the law to us all. We tolerate a worldly-minded, and diluted, and weakened piety in others, because we expect a similar toleration for ourselves. We make excuses for them, because we expect the like excuses for our own conduct in return. Instead of "seeking to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God," we have abused, shamefully abused, the fact that there is no perfection upon earth, and converted it into a license for any measure and any number of imperfections. We have set our highest mark upon an abstinence from immorality and the more polluting worldly amusements; an attendance upon an evangelical ministry; and an approval of orthodox doctrine; this, with the act of joining a Christian church, a participation in the Lord's supper, and a little occasional emotion under a sermon, and a hasty prayer night and morning, this, this is the religion of multitudes. There may be no habitual spirituality or heavenly-mindedness; no life of faith and communion with God; no struggling against sin, Satan and the world; no anxiety to grow in grace; no supreme regard to eternity; no studied and advancing meetness for the eternal world; no tenderness of conscience; no laborious disciplining of the temper; no cultivating of love; no making religion our chief business and our highest pleasure; no separation in spirit from the world — in short, no impress upon the whole mind, and heart, and conscience, and life, of the character of the Christian as delineated upon the page of Scripture. We need to be all taken out of the religious world, as it is called, and collected again round the Bible, to study what it is to *be* a Christian, as well as to be *called* one. Let us do this very thing. Let us

endeavor to forget what the bulk of professors are, and begin afresh to learn what they ought to be. Let us select the most eminently holy, devout, and conscientious Christians we can find ; and if we know not many living ones which stand high above the rest, let us go to the memoirs of departed ones, and say to ourselves, " Even these, distinguished as they are, do not come up to the standard of God's law ; and admitting this, as they did, if *they* bewailed their deficiencies and their imperfections, then what am *I*?" It is to be feared that we are corrupting each other, leading each other to be satisfied with a conventional piety. Many have been actually the worse for church membership. They were more intensely anxious and earnest before they came into fellowship, than they were afterwards. Their religion, in joining the communion of saints, as they professed to be, seemed to come into an ice-house, instead of a hot-house. They grew better in their former state than in their new one. At first they were surprised and shocked to see the lukewarmness, the irregularities, the worldliness, the inconsistencies, of many older professors, and exclaimed with grief and disappointment, " Is this the church of Christ?" After a while, a fatal influence came over them, and their piety sank to the temperature around them.

Let us, then, cast away the fatal opiate which so often quiets a troubled conscience, " I am as good as my neighbors," and go with prayer, trembling and anxiety to the Scriptures with the question, " What is it to be a Christian?" None but an earnest religion can be a sincere one ; none but an earnest religion will take us to heaven ; none but an earnest religion can be a happy one. Rouse, Christian professors, from your slumbers and your dreams. Multitudes of you are perishing in your sins ; you are going down to the pit with a lie in your right hand. Your profession alone will not save you, and it is all that some of you have to depend upon. There are millions of professors of religion in the bottomless pit, who brought no scandal upon religion while they lived, by immorality ; but the life of God was not in their

souls ; they had a name to live, but were dead. They looked around upon the low conventionalism of the day in which they lived, instead of studying the Bible for their standard of piety, and went to the bar of God, saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not been called by thy name?" where they met with the dreadful rebuff, and rejection, "I never knew you ; depart from me."

CHAPTER IV.

EARNESTNESS IN THE WAY OF INDIVIDUAL EXERTION, AND DIRECT ACTION FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

PATRIOTISM is a part of religion, and he who is a true lover of God will be a genuine lover of his country also. It is true the Bible knows nothing of national antipathies, but on the contrary condemns the absurd and wicked prejudice which leads the people of one land to hate those of another, because they are under another government, talk another language, and are separated from them by a sea, a river, or a land-mark. Still there are grounds of affection, and motives for benevolent action, relating to our own country, which do not appertain to any other. One of these is contiguity. We are bound to do good to all men as opportunity shall present itself, and especially to those in our own vicinity. The people who are starving at the antipodes ought to receive our bounty as soon and as far as we can send it to them, but the man who has just dropped down in utter exhaustion, and is dying at our door, has especial claim upon us. We must care for the perishing heathen—but shall we forget the perishing Englishman? To the former we can send missionaries, to the latter we can go ourselves. This, then, is the subject of the present chapter, the obligation of individual earnestness in the way of direct action for the conversion of souls. This must of course respect our countrymen, our neighbors, our families, our friends. Is such individual action necessary?

Look at the moral aspect of your country. It is now more than three centuries since the Reformation from Popery; almost two since the era of toleration; more than one since the revival of religion by the labors of

Whitfield and Wesley; nearly seventy years since the setting up of Sunday-schools by Robert Raikes; fifty since the spread of evangelical religion in the Church of England; forty-three since the establishment of the Bible Society, and a little more than that since the formation of the Religious Tract Society, and somewhat less since the invention and promulgation of the popular systems of education by Bell and Lancaster: to say nothing of the various institutions, such as Home Missionary Societies, Town Missions, District Visiting Societies, and other organizations, which have since then been set up for improving the spiritual condition of the people. The Bible Society has issued twenty million copies of the Scriptures. The Tract Society has sent out nearly five hundred million copies of books and tracts: other institutions have added millions more of Bibles, tracts, and prayer-books. Churches, chapels, and schools, have been multiplied beyond all precedent in former times. And yet what is the moral condition of the people of England, of Protestant England, at this moment? The town in which I live contains, with its suburbs, about two hundred and ten thousand inhabitants, and of these perhaps not more than forty thousands, above twelve years of age, are ever at public worship at the same time. Take from these all Roman Catholics, Unitarians, and other denominations who do not hold evangelical sentiments, and what a small portion remains out of the whole population who are enjoying those soul-converting means of grace which stand so intimately connected with eternal salvation. Where are the bulk of the remainder, and what is their state and character as regards eternity? This is but a specimen of other large towns, and of the state of the metropolis. What, then, it may be asked, must be the spiritual condition of this land of Bibles, of sanctuaries, of ministers; this valley of vision, this land of light?

If, however, it were merely the paucity of means of doing good we had to complain of, it would be a matter of less grief and horror; but let any one think also of the agencies, instruments, and means of doing evil, which are in active operation. The moral, or rather demor-

alized, condition of a large proportion of the people of this country is beyond the conception of those who have not been inquisitive into the subject. All persons know the prevalence of drunkenness and sensuality, and most are impressed vaguely with the idea that there is a great deal of infidelity at work ; but the depths of iniquity, the stagnant, pestiferous sinks of vice which are ever sending forth their destructive miasmata into the moral atmosphere, and poisoning the souls of the people of these realms, are neither known nor conjectured by those who are ignorant of the statistics of the kingdom of darkness.

A writer to whom the religious public are much indebted, has lately published a work, entitled "The Power of the Press," in which he has sent forth a statement, derived from authentic sources, and sustained by unquestionable evidence, which is enough, if anything can do it, to circulate a thrill of horror through the whole nation, and to rouse into activity every friend of his Bible, his country, and his God.

This indefatigable investigator informs us that 11,702,000 copies of absolutely vicious and Sabbath-breaking newspapers are annually circulated in these realms ; while the issues of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Trinitarian Bible Society, the Coldstream Free Press Bible Society, and the *grants* of the Religious Tract Society, did not amount last year to *one-third* of this immense number !

"But a more fearful revelation still remains. There are about *seventy* cheap periodicals (varying in price from three half-pence to one half-penny) issued weekly ; and supposing an extensively circulated series of popular works issued from Edinburgh, the tendency of which is believed by many to be injurious, are omitted, there remain at least *sixty* of a positively pernicious tendency. Of these the most innocent is one which has perhaps the largest circulation. It is said to issue 100,000 weekly. But though vicious principles are avowedly repudiated, yet a depraved and disordered imagination is fostered in this journal, by the introduction into its pages of French novels, and similar trash, as a principal feature. Then

comes a less scrupulous paper, with a weekly issue of about 80,000 ; followed by six papers, all a degree lower in the scale of corruption, with an average weekly circulation of 20,000 each, or yearly sale for the six, of 6,240,000. And lastly comes a catalogue of intolerably polluting trash, which, closely examined, will make the Christian shudder at its contemplation ; wondering where readers can be found, and amazed at the neglect and indifference of the church of Christ. The works thus alluded to may be classified thus : 1st, infidel ; 2nd, polluting. Of these two there are circulated a yearly average of 10,400,000.

“ But even beyond this dreadful limit, there is a very large annual circulation, into which the writer dare not enter, so awfully polluting is the character. In the last mentioned class, engravings and colorings are employed to excite the lowest passions. It is true, *these last works* are supposed to be sold by stealth, but they are easily procurable from the same sources as the papers and periodicals before mentioned. The vendors of the one generally procure the other ; moreover, the unstamped journals previously alluded to usually contain advertisements of these works ; and as the sale of these journals is large, they obtain a wide circulation for the filth, which, bad as they are themselves, they would profess to abominate.

“ Now, if we sum up the entire yearly circulation of the different kinds of popular, but manifestly pernicious literature, which has been passed in review before the reader, it will stand thus,

10 stamped papers	11,702,000
6 unstamped papers	6,240,000
About 60 miscellaneous papers	10,400,000
Worst class	520,000

Being a total of 28,862,000

“ The effect of this immense annual issue, which if at all mis-stated, the writer believes to be considerably below

the average, can scarcely be contemplated by the Christian for one moment without producing, we repeat, a thrill of horror! Week after week — week after week — year after year — year after year, does this literature meet the mind which may have been for a few weeks or months, perhaps, under Christian control one day in seven; or it arrests the attention of those who have never been so privileged. The process and effect are alike in both cases, though in one results may be more gradual. The mental appetite exists and must be fed; it meets with the food which we have just analyzed, at every turn, in every variety, to suit every taste."

What has been done (by the press) to meet this evil? Putting together the annual issues of Bibles, Testaments, Religious Tracts, Newspapers, and Periodicals of every kind, we find a total of 24,418,620, leaving a balance of 4,443,380 in favor of pernicious and corrupting literature.*

Let it, then, be imagined, if imagined it can be, what must be the moral state of multitudes in this country, when nearly thirty millions of such pestiferous publications are annually going out among the masses of our population. Let the minds of all Christian people be fixed upon these facts. Let them dwell upon the insult offered to God, the ruin brought upon souls, the injury done to morals, and the mischief perpetrated in the nation, by such a state of things. Friends of Christ, lovers of your species, professors of religion, you *must*

* As a supplement to this appalling statement, I may state that a few weeks since I received a copy of a number of one of these low, cheap, infidel publications, containing strictures on "The Anxious Inquirer." The writer of these strictures avowed himself an atheist, and indeed he has done ample justice to his profession, by effusions of the most vulgar, blasphemous, and horrid atheism I ever read. But what was most alarming is, this wretched messenger of mischief announced on its cover twelve places in London, where infidel meetings are held, and gave a list of subjects to be discussed, all intended to bring the Christian religion into contempt and derision. This number of the publication alluded to was ostentatiously exhibited in the window of a shop in this town where this and similar works are sold.

pause and ponder these statements. You must not read and *dismiss them*, as you would the statistics of political economy. The writer of these facts has led you to the very door of Satan's workshop, and has thrown open to you the scenes of that awful laboratory of mental and moral poison. He has shown you authors, composers, printers, engravers, publishers, booksellers, vendors, by myriads, all busy and indefatigable, to do — what? To destroy the Bible — to pull down the cross — to dethrone God — to subvert religion — to uproot the church — to turn man into a thinking and speaking brute, and, as a necessary consequence, to overturn all morality, to poison the springs of domestic happiness, to dissolve the ties of social order, and to involve our country in ruin. Is this so, or is it not? If it be, you are summoned to ponder this awful state of things, and to ask what can be done to arrest this tide of ruin, this awful cataract of perdition, which is dashing over the precipice of infidelity into the gulf of the bottomless pit, and precipitating millions of immortal souls into the boiling surges and tremendous whirlpools below. Hell is in earnest in ruining men's souls, if the church is not in earnest in saving them.

But what is to be done, and who is to do it? Much of course is to be done by the *pulpit*, and it is never to be forgotten that the preaching of the gospel is God's great instrument for the conversion of souls. Nothing can ever supersede this. Towering above all other means will the sacred desk, and he that fills it, ever stand, as God's chosen means for reclaiming the wandering and lost soul of apostate man to his Saviour. There must be no suspicion coming over the preacher or the hearer of the gospel, that the pulpit has had its day, done its work, and must give place to something else. It will *never* have had its day till the world has had *its* day. Preëminently adapted to man as man, through every period of his history, and every change of his condition, it will remain to the end of time, *the* great means for the sinner's conversion, and the saint's edification, sanctification and consolation. And the infidel operations we have just

witnessed to but proclaim with trumpet-call the more urgent necessity of an earnest ministry.

The appalling activity in corrupting the public mind just related, must be met also by religious organizations, such as Home Missionary Societies, and Town and City Missions, those admirable institutions for carrying light into the regions of darkness, and purity into the dens of filth. Churches and chapels, however numerous and well supplied with ministers and preachers, will not entirely meet the case, since multitudes who most need the instructions of the pulpit never come to receive them. There are millions to whom, if they ever know anything of the gospel, it must be carried. Under the pressure of want, men will seek the food of their bodies with an eagerness proportioned to the cravings of hunger; but though perishing for the lack of the bread of life, they will take no pains to obtain it, for they are unconscious of their necessities. What is wanted, then, is the plan of domiciliary visitation, and appeals to the people in their own localities, carried out to a still wider extent, and by a still larger and more perfect organization. Shall we ever have well-educated and devoted men, versed in all the popular systems of infidelity, fluent, eloquent, and bold, who will go upon a mission to the masses, and be able to conciliate them by kindness, and to convince them by argument, and thus to win them to Christ and to his church? Our town missionaries and scripture readers are doing great good, but we still want a class of agents above them in mental stature, who shall, by sound logic, scriptural knowledge, and commanding intellect, grapple with the demon of infidelity in its own domain.

The PRESS also must be worked with still greater power and efficiency. If it has a power for evil, it has also a power for good. The pulpit cannot do everything — some think it cannot do most in this educated age and nation — at any rate it is not jealous of the press as a rival, but invites its assistance as an auxiliary. The ministers of the sanctuary hail as coadjutors the priesthood of letters. The press must not be left, thank God is not left, in the hands of the men of the world, and the mot-

ley crew of all grades of scepticism. "Are they its friends? So are we. Are their liberties the offspring of its efforts? So are ours. Does it minister to their idols? And shall it not minister to the one living and true God? Let us therefore consecrate the press in the midst of our churches. Let *some of our most talented ministers of the gospel, who are adapted to the work, (and have no gift of elocution) devote themselves entirely to teaching by the press.* THE WORLD REQUIRES THEIR SERVICES. MILLIONS OF MINDS CAN BE REACHED ONLY BY MEANS OF THE PRESS." The Religious Tract Society is doing wonders, and will do greater wonders yet; let it be well supported. Our journals and periodical literature, from the bulky quarterly down to the penny magazine are doing great things. Let them be liberally sustained. If infidels and immoral writers are pouring forth a deluge of scepticism and vice, let us send forth a higher and a more mighty flood, to sweep away by its force the turbid streams, in the waters of which nothing lives, and which are depositing a pernicious and pestiferous slime, instead of a fertile soil. Christians, support well the religious press; remunerate and encourage your editors, authors, and societies, by pushing, to the widest possible extent, their publications. Grudge not the money you spend in supporting the press; very little is better spent.

Still this, even this, all this, is not enough. Give to the pulpit all the power that is claimed for it; give to social organization all the efficiency that it may be supposed and made by God's blessing to possess; and add to this the well directed energy of the press, — we have an evil to contend with, so gigantic in its strength, so diffused in its influence on all sides of us, and so infectious and malignant in its efforts, *that nothing short of the engagement, the energies, and the earnestness, of the whole church can cope with it.* The whole church must be employed for the conversion of the whole country. The levy *en masse* must be called out. The enemy is coming in like a flood; infidelity and immorality are invading us; the tocsin must be rung; the beacon-fire must be kindled on every hill of Zion; the sound must float from every tower and every

battlement, "To arms, To arms!" and every man that can shoulder a musket, or bear a pike, must take the field, and array himself against the foe. There is not a single member of a single church, male or female, young or old, rich or poor, but what ought to be engaged in *personal efforts* for the salvation of souls. An army may as rationally leave the battle to be fought by the officers alone, as the church may leave the conversion of the world to the ministers of the gospel. It is a fundamental error, a practical heresy of most pernicious and deadly influence, to consider the conversion of souls as merely ministerial work. This is Popery and Puseyism, which would restrict the conveyance of renewing grace to the medium of priestly hands, and sacramental channels. Against this the whole church of God ought to rise up in the attitude of firm resistance, and with the language of indignant protestation, as an invasion of the rights of the Christian people, a robbery of the privileges of the "chosen generation," and a deposition of the "royal priesthood." As an honor, — and it is one of the brightest and richest that can light upon the head of mortal or immortal, — the work of saving souls is as truly and as legitimately within the reach of the pious pauper in the work-house, or the godly child in the Sunday school, or the religious maid-servant in a family, as within the grasp of the mitred prelate. The church, the whole church, and nothing less than the whole church, inclusive of members as well as ministers, is the priesthood by which the work of conversion is to be carried on upon earth. The clergy-church, that is, a church consisting only of ministers apart from the people, is a figment, which may do well enough at Rome, or at Oxford, but it will not do wherever the New Testament is possessed, read, and understood. This divine, heavenly Magna Charta of the Christian church must be held up to wrest from the usurpation of tyrannizing ecclesiastics the assumed exclusive patent for saving souls; and as a divine right of the people, must be bestowed upon any one who has grace enough to claim it, and virtue enough to exercise it. Delightful and auspicious it is to see this admitted and

put forward by authorities which will have weight with those who will not be swayed by the same statements coming from other quarters.

In the North British Review for November last, is a critique on a work by the Chevalier Bunsen, Prussian ambassador to the British Court, entitled "The Church of the Future;" which, though it be well worthy the attention of every thoughtful mind, contains many strange views, and yet many deserving of approval; among the latter is the following extract selected and commented upon in the Review:

"But, in considering the assistance rendered to the pastors in the evangelical instruction and education of the people, we have met with a mighty institution, the only one of its kind, the 17,000 schoolmasters who stand at the side of the parochial clergy, and assist them in the congregation. That which is good and evangelical in the system of the clergy-church is still to be found in it, and new and vigorous shoots present themselves on every side, and manifest a life full of hope for the future. We found the most startling and important signs of this in the help afforded to the church in her care of the poor, the sick, and the prisoners. We were met by a zealous company of men and women, who had founded institutions of helpful love, for the reformation of those who had gone astray, for the maintenance of homeless and orphan children, for the comfort of the sick and the prisoner. We were met by operatives full of faith, and by a holy band of deaconesses performing the works of the merciful sisters of the clergy-church, without vows, in the full freedom of the Gospel, and in the might of free, because thankful, love. Now every one who considers the way in which the diaconate first decayed and died, and how it is especially wanting in the clergy-church, because it requires for its free development the full communion of the laity, and the full acknowledgment of the universal priesthood, will readily comprehend the historical significance of the fact, that amongst the vigorous offshoots of the church life of the present day, the diaconate is the most distinctly and gloriously prominent. *This is the*

ministry of love, and in a special manner the ministry of the church of the Future. We may here behold coming to the birth the new element of that church of the Future, whose birth-throes we all feel, of that free congregation of faithful men, to which the groaning of the creature, and the ever more fearful revelations of the misery of mankind, are pointing. Here is that ministry which is open to all; here is that approval of our faith to which every one is called; here is that exercise of the priesthood for which every constitution of the church gives liberty; here is that centre from which the constitution of this church of the Future must proceed, if it is to be a partaker of an inward and spiritual life." — Bunsen.

"All hail to such a church of the Future! The world yearns for it, creation groans for it. Society is sick at heart, sick of sore maladies which politics can scarcely cure; sick of many empirics and few physicians. And Christ's church alone has the *panacea* — the universal cure. Deacons and deaconesses, brothers and sisters of charity, with Christ's love in their hearts, and no pope's yoke on their necks — priests and priestesses, self-devoted to the High Priest's own work of going about to do good — such is the ministry the age, the church, and the world all demand. Otherwise, churches are self-consuming; light and life go out in a cold vacuum. Pastors, elders, deacons, schoolmasters, people, eat in on themselves and on one another. Forms of polity and worship stand; rights of rule and rights of choice are balanced; but love dies, and with love, all peace and joy. An earnest out-going ministry, in all who are the Lord's — in Dorcas as in Paul — is the grand want of the times. What church will realize this? That is the church of the Future. Bunsen, Arnold, Vinet, Chalmers, all are one here. For at the last, intellect, humanity, piety, are always one."

Yes, this is all true, and just, and impressive; we want the Christian people to come forth, and claim and exercise to the utmost their privilege, as God's priesthood, fully commissioned by the Divine Head of the church, to evangelize the world. The remainder of this chapter must

now be devoted to a consideration of *personal* effort for the salvation of souls, viewed in the light of a *duty*. Yes, it *is* the duty of *every one*; not an individual can plead exemption. Is it not the duty of every one to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself? If so, does not this love demand that we should seek the conversion of souls? Can we pretend to love God, and not seek that others should love him too? Or can we love our neighbor, and not seek his salvation? Are not all Christians represented as the salt of the earth, and the light of the world? And can they answer to these impressive figurative representations of their duty and design, if they never attempt to diffuse by personal effort their holy religion? As we have opportunity, we are commanded to do good. What good is *so* good as saving souls, and have we not all ever-recurring opportunities? Consider your capability; you *can* do something for the salvation of souls. Every one who has the knowledge of the way of salvation, and a tongue to speak, can explain it to others. Or if too timid to speak, he can give a tract, or write a letter, which will speak for him. There is not, in all the family of God, a single child who can do nothing for the cause of his heavenly Father, in our apostate world; and nothing more is necessary to constitute obligation in such a matter as this, but the means and an opportunity. If, when the ability and opportunity concur to rescue a fellow-creature from a watery grave, or a fiery death, the obligation is complete; how much more so, where the means and opportunity are possessed to save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins! Souls are perishing all around you; in your town; in your streets; in your neighbor's houses, and in your own.

Say not you *can* do nothing. Have you ever tried? Have you ever taken a bundle of tracts, and gone out into a dark street, and entered the houses of the poor, and begun a conversation with them about their souls? You have a Bible: have you ever put it in your pocket, and gone to some habitation of ignorance and sin, and asked permission to read a chapter? Have you ever

written a letter to an unconverted friend or relative, on the subject of religion, and the salvation of the soul? Have you ever mildly expostulated with a relative on the neglect of this momentous concern? Have you ever gently and gracefully reproved a swearer or a Sabbath breaker, for his sin against the Lord? Have you ever dropped a word to a fellow-traveller in a steamboat, or a railway carriage? Not do anything! Will you, till you have tried some such simple and easy methods as these, have the courage to tell God so? Not do anything! Will you degrade yourself so much, and sink so low in your own estimation, as to say you are a nonentity in the church as regards the church's mission to our world? Not do anything! What is it in you that says so, your indolence or your modesty? You *must* do something, or answer for it at the bar of God, *why* you have not done anything. Be it that you have only *one* talent, or a fraction of a talent; that fraction, or that unit, must be employed, or you must bear the character and meet the doom of the slothful servant.

Of course each professing Christian, in his efforts to do good, must consult his own abilities, means, and opportunities. It is admitted that there are varieties here which must not be overlooked. Every one must say "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* do?" and each should honestly, and with good intent, look into his circumstances to see what are Christ's claims upon *him*. Perhaps it will be found, upon examination, that those do least in the way of personal effort who have the ability to do most; I mean the talented, the wealthy, and the manufacturer who has a large number of persons in his employ, and who might be supposed to have a great influence over them. It happens that with the exception of pious females of the upper classes, men of talent and business are most rarely found engaged in personal effort for the salvation of their neighbors; they will give their money, and perhaps will also give their time, to the business of committees; and this so far is well, for many will not do this; but how seldom are they found engaged in personal effort for the conversion and salvation of

others. Yet what might they not do in this way if they tried? Their station and their talents would give them advantages for this sublime occupation, which others do not possess. Conceive of the effect which might be expected to result, if all the wealthy and intelligent members of our churches would give only one hour a week to the labor of diffusing religion, by endeavoring to influence the minds of others, and win their attention to the great concerns of religion.

This applies with especial force to master manufacturers, and others who have a large number of men in their employ, and under their influence. One gentleman is known to me who has several hundred men in his service, and who takes a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of his workmen. He has a Bible class for all who are willing to attend. He holds a prayer meeting with them every week; distributes religious tracts; gives them counsel and admonition; encourages their attendance upon public worship without at all exerting any sectarian influence, and is about to establish for their benefit a library and reading-room. He is a catholic-spirited churchman, but never suffers his predilections for the Church of England to influence him in his endeavors for the spiritual welfare of the objects of his solicitude. What might not be expected to our population if all our manufacturers and large retail shop-keepers felt the same pious solicitude for the souls of their work-people and shopmen as does this devoted and eminent servant of our Lord? How this would counteract the infidelity and immorality which so extensively prevail among our laboring population, and which, with such busy assiduity, are cherished by a corrupt press, and by those emissaries of Satan, the teachers of scepticism, profanity, and licentiousness! Our factories are the strongholds of infidelity. It is there that all the elements of moral mischief mingle and ferment. The chaplain of the hospital in Birmingham was informed by one of the patients whom he visited, that out of three hundred men who worked in the same manufactory as he did, he could affirm of his own personal knowledge that

one hundred of them were avowed infidels. Now there is no reason to suppose that this is a solitary case, but on the contrary a specimen of what very extensively prevails. It is among these men that the publications already alluded to are circulated. Surely it becomes Christian masters to ask whether they cannot do something to arrest the progress of this dreadful mischief. But alas! too many of the men of trade, and even of the Christian masters, are either so little concerned about their workmen as to care for nothing but just what measure of profit they can get from their labor, or else they are on such bad terms with them as to render nugatory any efforts they might make for their spiritual welfare.

Pious females have ever been foremost in this good work of saving souls by personal effort, and have been eminently successful in their labors of love. Married women, who have but few domestic cares to confine them at home, and unmarried ones of a sufficiently advanced age, who have much leisure at command, may be singularly useful. "Devout and honorable women, not a few," are already busily employed in this way. Christian women, we appeal to you all, to join this noble sisterhood of benevolence. We would not have you lessen that attention to the temporal wants, sorrows, and cares of your sex, for which you are already so eminent, but we would have you add to it a still deeper solicitude for the miseries that oppress and ruin their souls. You know how the church of Rome boasts of her "Sisters of Mercy," whom she sends out from her convents into the abodes of ignorance, disease, and want. It is, after all, but a shallow device, though a plausible means, for drawing attention to Popery, and conciliating public favor towards it. We call, therefore, upon *you*, without abjuring the names, the duties, or the comforts, of the wife and the mother, to perform the service of an evangelist, and by such acts as fall within your own sphere to spread abroad the knowledge of religion, in order to save the souls of your own sex, and thus to be, in the fullest sense of the words, the Sisters of Mercy indeed.

Whatever be our situation, there is no hope of our

doing much good in this way without having a definite object in view, and pursuing it in a right way, and with a proper spirit. The direct aim should, of course, be the actual conversion of the soul to God. Where nothing else, however, can be accomplished, besides inducing people to read the Word of God and religious books, and to attend upon the preaching of the Gospel, *something* is done ; but the aim of a Christian should be, to be the instrument of making others truly and really such as he is himself.

To accomplish this end, and to find out the best means within your power, you must be studious and inventive. It is astonishing what means will occur to him, who is deeply anxious and firmly resolved upon the accomplishment of some great object. Let the heart be once on fire with zeal, and then the light of this sacred flame will ascend into the judgment, as well as fall upon surrounding objects, and disclose means and methods of action which will be hidden from colder intellects. When once the passion for saving souls has got possession of the heart, it will supply not only incentives but instruments. Necessity is the mother of invention, and when we are brought to this determination, "I *must* be useful ; I *must* do something to save souls ; I *must* find means of doing good ;" means will present themselves ; and opportunities will occur. Invention is a secondary creation, and he who cannot find opportunities will certainly make them. Read the life of Harlan Page, a reference to which will be contained in a future chapter, and learn in how many ways a man, even in humble life, may be useful, whose heart is set upon doing good.

It is of immense consequence to remember that whatever you do for the salvation of souls must be in the earnestness of love, expressed with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. There is a boisterousness and vehemence, not to say rudeness, in the manner of some, which defeat their own object. They seem determined to take the citadel by storm ; while love undermines it, and enters it almost unperceived. There is a beautiful illustration of this in the life of Mr. Simeon, of Cam-

bridge. Konig, the only son of a rich merchant of Amsterdam, came over to England, and was received as a guest by Mr. Simcon's brother in the Isle of Wight. It soon appeared that young Konig was destitute of true religion, and ignorant of its principles; but his appearance and manners were such as to invite kindly attention and feeling. Mr. Simeon's benevolent heart was drawn towards him, and he earnestly desired to win this soul for Christ. One day he was riding a few yards in advance of a party of which Konig was one. Konig, seeing Mr. Simeon alone, rode up to join him; and perceiving that his lips were in motion, though he was not engaged in conversation, inquired, with his usual simplicity, "What he was saying." Mr. Simeon replied, "I was praying for my young friend." These words made a deep impression upon the interesting youth, and caused him to regard Mr. Simeon as one who was tenderly concerned for his welfare. His mind had in fact been prepared by the providence of God for this impression, which might otherwise have been transient. The party, who were making the tour of the island, arrived at an inn, where Konig and another gentleman were necessitated to occupy a double-bedded room. The gentleman, before he retired to rest, knelt down and prayed by his bed-side. This, it afterwards appeared, was a new sight to the young Hollander; but it went to his heart. He had long been unhappy, from feeling the unsatisfactoriness of the things which are ordinarily accounted capable of conferring happiness; but knew not the better way. Immediately, however, as he afterwards declared, he said to himself, "How happy is that man! What would I give to feel myself in the hands of an Almighty Guide and Protector, as he surely does!" Under this conviction, he fell upon his knees, which he had not before done in private for years, and the very next morning he unbosomed himself to his companion. He was thus prepared for the reply of Mr. Simeon to his inquiry, and was not repelled, but encouraged by it. Mr. Simeon, perceiving that the Spirit of God had marked this stranger for himself, resolved to do all in his power to train

him for happiness and usefulness. His exertions were blessed for his conversion : and the writer who gives the account says, in referring to it afterwards, " The remembrance of that youth, graceful in person and beaming with benignity, is even now redolent with everything lovely and of good report. He was in fact ripening for early removal to a higher sphere. He returned to Holland, where he died of consumption ; but not till he had been permitted and enabled to witness for his Saviour a good confession in his native city. The report of his behavior during his death illness excited considerable interest and surprise in Amsterdam, where his family were well known. Many, it has been stated, seemed to say, ' What new thing is this ? ' "

This beautiful story is replete with instruction on the subject of this chapter.

Such efforts require a high state of personal religion to supply the impulse, and keep up the motion. The fire of zeal must be fed with the fuel of piety, or it will be only as " the crackling of thorns beneath a pot," a noisy blaze, and a momentary one also. And then, to be useful, a Christian must be *consistent*. A diseased or dying physician may be the means of healing others ; but an inconsistent Christian only inspires revulsion and disgust by all his endeavors to do good ; disgust not only against himself as a hypocrite, but against the very religion he would teach as being all hypocrisy also, wanting the confirmation of example. They who would save others, then, should exhibit in themselves all the holiness and happiness of that salvation which it is their aim to communicate. There are some persons whom we could wish never to say a word to recommend religion unless they would show its beauty in a consistent example ; and whom we could desire never to attempt to save their friends, unless they gave better proof they were really and in earnest seeking to save themselves. Not that the instrument of conversion must of necessity himself be absolutely perfect ; for then none but an angel from heaven could be employed in saving man, but he ought to approach as near to it as possible. It should, moreover

be recollected as an encouragement to Christian exertion, that it is with the instrument of conversion as it is with many other instruments, it improves by use. If you would grow in grace yourselves, seek to be the means of communicating grace to others. A light is brightened by kindling other lights, and a fire is made to burn with a greater intensity by the neighboring fire which it has ignited. We get good by doing it; and if we save not others, the very attempt aids, and in one sense increases our own salvation.

Take the following anecdote from America, in illustration of the necessity of consistency in those who would make personal effort for the salvation of sinners.

“An excellent minister, referring to his own conversion, said, ‘When I was yet a young and thoughtless man, a pious deacon addressed me about my salvation. I was angry; my heart rose in bitterness against him. I reproached him; pointed out the inconsistencies of professors, talked indeed like a madman, while my conscience was grinding me like a mill-stone. He bore it all with meekness, perfectly unmoved. If he had only given one retort, shown one angry feeling, it would have relieved me. His Christian meekness was too much for me. I went into the woods, smarting’ with my wounds, fell under what he had said to me, and went and asked his pardon.’ ”

And now by what *arguments* can you be persuaded, by what *inducements* moved, by what *incentives* excited, to make these efforts? Consider YOUR PRINCIPLES. You believe in the immortality of the soul—in the evil of sin—in the curse of the law—in the wrath of God—in the reality of hell—in the horrors of damnation—in the intensity and eternity of the quenchless fire. You believe in a merciful God—a redeeming Saviour—a converting Spirit—in the possibility of salvation for each one of the perishing millions around you—in the ineffable and eternal bliss of heaven. You believe that it is God’s will that those men should be saved, and that they should be saved by human instrumentality, and by your exertions among the other means of life eternal. This,

all this, is in your creed. Christians, study afresh your articles of faith, that you may know more accurately than you seem to do, what ought to be the obligations of your conscience, and the actions of your life. Indeed, you must *do* more, or *believe* less; your creed and your conduct are at variance. Follow only one human soul into eternity; trace its endless course through delights which flesh and blood could not sustain; or through torments which human nature must have supernatural strength to endure; pursue it along the course of its eternal progression, and contemplate it making acquisitions in knowledge, holiness, and happiness, all but infinite, and leaving behind even the former attainments of cherubim and seraphim — or forever sinking from gulf to gulf of misery and despair in the bottomless abyss — and then conceive, if it be possible, in some tolerable degree, what an event is the salvation of a single soul! And when you have revolved the comprehension of this mighty and mysterious unit of a single soul, carry it on to the tens, and hundreds, and thousands, or tens of thousands of such souls that are hurrying on to eternity, even in the town where you dwell! Christians, again I say, abjure these vast ideas, or act more conformably to them. Abandon your belief in these stupendous realities, or at any rate prove that *you* are absolved from the obligation of arresting this tide of ruin, and swelling this stream of salvation, or else be more in earnest in your endeavor to save souls. You must do one or the other. In your present conduct, with such a profession upon your lips, and with such lukewarmness in your zeal, your conduct is the most monstrous inconsistency in our world. Infidels see it, and comparing your creed and your conduct, taunt you with your hypocrisy. “I remember,” says Mr. Binney, “a very striking circumstance which a neighboring minister mentioned to me in proof of this. There was in the town in which he preached, an avowed and determined infidel. He saw this man one Sunday evening in his p’ace of worship. He was preaching on some of the great verities of faith, and the duties resulting therefrom. As he was, the next morning, passing the door of the

man, he was standing at it, and he said to him, 'I saw you at worship last night, and was rather surprised to see you there, as you do not believe what I was preaching.' 'No,' said he, 'nor you either.' 'Indeed.' 'No;' he went on to say, 'why, if I were to believe the things you affirm to be true, and which are written in your books, I should not know how to contain myself. I should feel their importance so much, that I should exhibit them wherever I went. I should not know how to hold in the enthusiasm they would excite. But I do not believe them, nor do you, or you would be very different people from what you are.' " Dreadful sarcasm! Cutting irony! Withering rebuke! But how deserved! Shall we not feel it! Shall we not learn our defect, our duty, our inconsistency, even from an infidel! Let us look at and judge ourselves as infidels do, who examine us and try us by our creed and profession. Rise, rise to action! do something worthy of your principles! Roll away the reproach, and silence the taunt, of your adversaries!

Think of THE HONOR OF SUCCESS! What a volume, never to be fully known in this world, is comprehended in the apostle's beautiful language, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." A vagrant sinner, wandering from God, from holiness, and bliss, restored to the fountain of life and light — a soul, dead in trespasses and sins, quickened into life — a multitude of sins, each one of which containing the sentence and the venom of an eternal curse, all covered over by an act of pardoning mercy, — what an achievement! The liberation of a nation from the fetters of slavery, and the rescue of an empire from the ravages of a pestilence, viewed as temporal deliverances, are not to be compared with the eternal salvation of one immortal soul! Had one of the planets of our system broken the chain of gravity, and was rushing off into space, threatening ruin to itself, and to other orbs, into collision with which, in its course of destruction, it might

be brought, and it were in our power to restore it again to its place, its dependence, and its order; it would be less a matter of exultation, than to be the instrument of saving a single soul from the bitter pains of eternal death. What was the civic crown awarded to him who had saved the life of a Roman soldier on the field of battle; or the statue of brass erected to him who had defeated his country's foe in a hundred battles; or the shrine prepared in the temple of fame for him who had enriched his country and the world by some splendid discovery in science, or invention in the arts, compared with the crown of amaranth which shall flourish forever on the brow of the Christian who hath saved a soul from death? Medals, statues, arches, processions, are all puerilities compared with this; and such is the distinction placed within the reach of every child of God! What an incentive to earnestness this! and yet how few the competitors for such a crown, and such an honor!

Consider, moreover, what OTHERS HAVE DONE, and done with no greater advantages than you have possessed. Instances have occurred, perhaps within the range of your own observation, of persons who have laid themselves out with extraordinary earnestness, and with as extraordinary success, for the salvation of souls. They have been the honored instruments of bringing many to Christ. It is their exquisite felicity on earth, and will be their still higher felicity in heaven, to receive the grateful acknowledgments of those whom they have plucked as brands from the burning. This is a happiness which angels know not. They indeed rejoice over souls converted by others, but never over any converted by themselves: in this particular, they are inferior to many a poor peasant, who has been the instrument of saving a soul from death. Envy not such persons, but imitate them. Their bliss may be yours. What they have done, you, by God's grace, may do. It was not by might nor by power that they did it, but by God's truth and by God's Spirit. The truth may be presented by you as it was by them, and God's Spirit is as willing to come on your humble labors, as he was upon theirs. He loves to

bless feeble but willing instruments, that he may magnify his own power.

As proof of what some others have done, take the following instance, which has been brought under my notice by one of our home missionaries, in a letter I lately received from him. After describing the great spiritual destitution of large tracts of our country, and our inability to supply by any organization we now have, or are ever likely to have, this lamented deficiency, he adds, "I have been thinking of a plan, which in some instances has been tried and greatly blessed, for the spread of the gospel and the conversion of souls. *Are there not in the churches of our cities and large towns, men of ardent piety and love to souls, of ability to preach the gospel with simplicity, affection, and power, of wealth to support themselves, and leisure to labor for God and precious souls?* Are not some of their talents buried, for want of a proper sphere for their exertion? Could they not obtain a comfortable residence for themselves in these districts, and devote themselves to the eternal welfare of those for whom no other spiritual provision is made?"

"A dear relative of mine, some years ago, had a considerable amount of property left him. He at once retired from business, to devote himself entirely to the work of the Lord. He was the instrument of introducing the gospel to this town where I now labor. He went to reside at a village about eight miles from hence. He there began to preach, built one chapel, then another, and then another, in different hamlets. We have two village chapels connected with us besides. Other chapels in this locality sprung from his efforts. It is gratifying and astonishing to consider how the gospel has spread, and is still spreading; and we trace back these streams to the blessing of God upon the efforts of this servant of his. He died in the pulpit, nearly four years ago. His son, now residing upon his own farm, is the zealous and successful pastor of the church which his father was the instrument of gathering. Two day schools and four Sabbath schools have arisen from the same efforts.

"Now, sir, are there not others connected with our

churches who may go and do likewise? May we not believe that God would crown with his blessing such efforts as these?"

Believe! *We are sure of it.* This is what we want. This we must have, or we can never overtake the population of our country with the means of grace. I say again and again, and I say it with all possible emphasis, and would send it, if I could, with a trumpet-blast over the land, "*Societies must not be substitutes for personal labors. Organization must not crush individualism.*" Here was an individual waiting for no society, but going off himself to the scene of moral desolation—venturing alone into the wilderness—going single-handed, but strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, to pour the light of truth over a dark neighborhood. See how God honored and blessed him! what good he did!—what a name he left! Ye pious, well-read, gifted, and zealous tradesmen, who have talents as well as piety, and, in addition to all these, abundant wealth, or a competency, at any rate, why not imitate this beautiful example? Why content yourselves with getting more wealth, which you do not want, when you might be employed in building chapels, forming churches, saving souls, and planting schools? How noble an association—the country gentleman and the village pastor! the retired tradesman and the preacher of the gospel! Is there nothing to fire your ambition, to excite your ardor, to kindle a holy enthusiasm, in such a prospect and such a hope? I am not setting aside an educated ministry, by a system of lay preaching, but am speaking of spots where no congregation exists, no chapel is built, and where none is ever likely to exist without some such plan as this.

Remember HOW LITTLE YOU HAVE HITHERTO DONE. You have experimentally known the way of salvation, and the value of a soul, these ten, twenty, thirty years, and yet, up to this hour, you have perhaps never won a soul to God! perhaps have never tried. Marvellous! Painful neglect, irretrievable omission! The wasted hours can never be recalled, the lost souls that have dropped into the pit from beneath your very eye and hand

can never be placed again within the circle of your influence. As you saw them falling, you stretched out no helping hand, and there amidst the torments of despair they are, uttering their reproaches upon your cruel indifference. Time is still rolling on ; souls are still crowding to perdition, and soon, soon, both you and they will be in eternity ! Hasten, oh hasten, to the scene of ruin ! put forth every energy ! their damnation lingers not, and shall your compassion linger ? Shall your efforts still be withheld ?

Once more consider what would be the result, *were ALL THE MEMBERS of our churches stirred up to an earnest endeavor to save souls.* Take a community of Christians, of three, four, or five hundred communicants, yea, of a lesser number, and think of all these, each in his own sphere, and according to his own talents, means, and opportunity, laboring for God and souls. Think of five hundred, or even of one hundred, scattered over the whole expanse of a town or village, communicating more or less with the whole population : some of them masters and mistresses at the head of families ; others manufacturers presiding over large establishments of workmen ; others servants in the midst of godless families ; others workmen surrounded by wicked fellow-workers ; others rich or well informed, and possessing considerable influence in society ; others poor and inhabiting courts where neighbors on all hands have an opportunity to see their conduct and hear their conversation ; others young and possessing all the health and energy of their years, and in the habit of meeting with persons of their own age ; — let such a community be conceived of, where all these members were walking in holy conversation and godliness, sending forth the light of a beautiful example, full of zeal, laboring for the salvation of their fellows, and inspired with the ambition and animated with the hope of saving souls by personal effort, each *studying* what he could do, and each doing what he could — what might not be looked for as the glorious result of such general activity, zeal, and earnestness ? What an awakening would take place, what revivals would come on ! Would not God pour out

his Spirit on such churches as these? What prayer would ascend, and what showers of blessings would come down in their season! When our churches shall exhibit such scenes as these, then will God's work go on in the earth! And why do they *not* exhibit such scenes? Are not these the scenes they *ought* to exhibit? Is not this the intention for which they are raised up? Friends of Christ, and truth, and God, look back for a moment again to the horrifying details of a former part of this chapter — read again the statistics of the Pandemonium of infidelity and immorality, and say if the passion for ruining souls shall be more intense among the emissaries of Satan, than the passion for saving them shall be among the followers of the Lamb. O what, and who, shall rouse the church of God to a sense of her duty, her destiny, and her honor, as God's instrument for converting an ungodly world? Where is the more than *trumpet* breath that with the thunders of the skies and the voice of eternal truth shall break in upon the slumber of a luxurious church, and rouse her to her mission as a witnessing and a proselyting body! What visitations of mercy or of judgment; what internal commotions, or external assaults; what national convulsions or social disruptions, are necessary to call her to her work, and prepare her to perform it? When shall all controversies seem to be little or nothing, compared with the church's one great controversy against sin, Satan, and perdition? When shall every Christian feel that God's chief end of keeping him out of heaven for a season is that he might keep immortal souls out of hell? When shall another Luther rise up in the midst of the Protestant church, and reform us from our worldly-mindedness, even as the first, delivered us from Popery? When shall another Whitfield pass through the midst of us, and with his burning eloquence kindle a fire of zeal in our hearts which shall consume the dross of earthliness, and purify the gold of our faith? Shall infidelity, popery, and false philosophy, share the world between them? Individual Christians, priesthood of God, *consider and decide.*

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIAN EARNESTNESS IN FAMILY RELIGION.

THE next step from individual earnestness is to that which is expressed at the head of this chapter. This, of course, has reference to the duties of PARENTS. It is not my intention to enter at large on the great subject in all its details of religious education ; this I have already done in my work entitled "The Family Monitor, or Help to Domestic Happiness ;" but to insist on the importance and necessity of carrying forward this work with the most intense solicitude and the most untiring devotedness. Perhaps at *no* period in the church's history has this been understood and felt as it ought to be ; but it is to be feared that there have been few periods since the revival of religion, when it has been less felt than it is now. How few are the habitations, even of professors, upon entering which the stranger would be compelled to say, " Surely this *is* the house of God, this *is* the gate of heaven !" And yet ought it not to be so ? Ought not the dwellings of the righteous to be filled with the very element of piety, the atmosphere of true religion ? It may be that family prayer, such as it is, is coldly and formally, though with little seriousness and no unction, performed ; but even this, in many cases, is wholly omitted, and scarcely anything remains to indicate that God has found a dwelling in that house. There may be no actual dissipation, no drunkenness, no card-playing, but oh, how little of true devotion is there ! How few families are there so conducted as to make it a matter of surprise that any of the children of such households should turn out otherwise than pious ! how many that lead us greatly to wonder that any of the children should turn out otherwise than irreligious ! Now the church cannot be in

earnest if its families are not. An awakening attention to the claims of religion must begin in the domestic circle. Ministers may be in earnest for the salvation of the young, schoolmasters and mistresses may be in earnest for their salvation, but if parents also are not, all the efforts and influence both of the pulpit and the school united will be in vain. Home is usually the mould of character; and the parent is the help or hindrance of the minister of religion. Parents, this chapter, then, is for you. Fathers and mothers, read not another line until you have lifted up your hearts to God in prayer, for a blessing on what is now submitted to your attention.

Thoroughly understand and remember what it is we are now considering; it is not merely religious education, but *earnestness* in this momentous duty. It is not whether you are paying *some* attention to the salvation of your children, but whether you are paying such attention as this great subject requires; whether you are so devoting yourself to the religious education of your children as that a visitor on leaving your house shall bear this testimony concerning your parental solicitude: "That father and mother are really anxious for their children's salvation; it is seen in all their conduct. This is the question, whether you are so pursuing this object as that your children themselves shall say, "My father and mother are truly in earnest about my soul." This is the question, I repeat, whether religion is the great thing, the one thing, you are pursuing for them? Does this gather up into itself your chief solicitude and your general plans? What I mean by the earnestness of domestic religion will be obvious from the following considerations.

I. It includes a *deep thoughtfulness* about the subject; a *religious* thoughtfulness. You will, if you are thus pensive, often say; "I am a parent. I am a *Christian* parent. I profess to believe that my child has a soul, the salvation or the loss of which will depend much upon me. Yes, upon me does it much depend whether my children are to be forever in glory, or in perdition. How inexpressibly awful! How tremendously important! I have

not only bodies to care for, or minds to cultivate, but souls. immortal souls, to bring to Christ! Every other parent, the beast, the bird, teaches by instinct to their offspring the highest good of which their nature is capable; and shall I, by neglecting to teach mine religion, leave out the highest good of which their immortal nature is susceptible? Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, yea they give suck to their young; and shall I be more cruel than they?"

II. There must be a right understanding and a *constant recollection of the nature and design of the domestic constitution.*

Families are the nurseries both of the state and of the church; and if this be true, then the design of the domestic economy must be to form the good citizen and the true Christian. No doubt the present and future welfare of the individual members of each household, their right conduct towards each other, and their own good training for any domestic relations they may sustain, are the proximate objects to be sought; but the ultimate end is the formation of a character in which patriotism, loyalty, and piety, shall be beautifully united and harmonized. Well instructed, well ordered, and well governed families, are the springs which from their retirements send forth the tributary streams that make up by their confluence the majestic flow of national greatness and prosperity. No state can be prosperous where family order and subordination are generally neglected, and every one *will* be prosperous, whatever be its form of political government, where these are maintained. Disorderly families are the sources of vicious characters, pestilent criminals, factious demagogues, turbulent, rebels, and tyrannical oppressors, who are their neighbors' torment and their country's scourge.

But every family has also a sacred character belonging to it, which ought ever to be sustained; I mean it is a preparatory school both for the church militant and the church triumphant, where the immortal soul is to be trained up, by the influence of a pious education, for the fellowship of saints on earth, and for the felicities of a

higher association still, in heaven. The mother, as she presses her babe to her bosom, or sees the little group sporting around the hearth ; and the father, as he collects the circle round his chair or his table ; as he directs their education, or selects for them their future occupation, should never forget to say to themselves, " These are given to us that we may train them up to be useful members of society, and holy members of the church. God and our country will demand them at our hands. Yea, the destinies of the world will in some measure be affected by them, and the present and all future generations of mankind have claims upon us in reference to the training of our children." Yes, those children are something more than living domestic playthings ; something more than animated household ornaments, who, by their elegant accomplishments, and graceful manners, shall adorn the habitation, and constitute a father's pride, a mother's boast : they are the future generation of our country, and the next race of friends or enemies to the cause of God on earth. The family, then, I repeat, is the mould of the state and the church, where the members of both are cast and formed, and this ought never, for a single day, to be forgotten.

III. Earnestness implies *a deep sense of the tremendous responsibility of the parental relation*. Delightful as it may be to hear the infant prattle ; to witness the gambols of childhood's joyous years ; to mark the growing development of faculty, and the gradual formation of character during youth's advance to manhood ; interesting as it is to see the slow unfolding of the human flower, a solemn sense of responsibility ought, with all this, to come over the mind. It is an awful expression, " I am a parent ;" for what is this but saying, " I have immortal souls intrusted to my care, whose destiny for eternity will be affected by my conduct?" Fond mother, look at that babe hanging on thy breast, and those other children sporting around your knee ; and thou, the father of the group, watching with a parent's and a husband's swelling heart, thy wife and the mother of thy children, and indulging only in joyous emotions, and sportive expressions, pause, ponder, reflect ! millions of ages from that moment

of domestic ecstasy, every one of those little happy creatures will be either in heaven, or in hell — will be a seraph or a fiend — will be enduring inconceivable torment, or enjoying ineffable felicity ; and much, as to which it shall be, will depend upon you. Overwhelming thought ! *Is it true ? Can it be true ?* It is ; and you admit it, at least by profession. Then, I say again, how tremendous the responsibility of a parent ! This is earnestness, to have this fact written on our very heart ; to see it ever standing out in visible characters before our eyes ; to carry it with us everywhere, and into everything ; to be ever saying to ourselves, “ My child is immortal, and his eternal destiny in great measure depends upon me. I am not only the father of his existence, but in some measure of his destiny. I shall be the means, perhaps, of raising him to heaven, or sinking him to perdition. I am educating him to be an associate with the devil and his angels in everlasting fire, or a companion with the innumerable company of angels in glory everlasting. O God, help me ! for who is sufficient for these things ? ”

IV. Arising out of this, and as a necessary adjunct, earnestness implies *a concentration of our chief solicitude upon the salvation of the soul.* A Christian parent, who is not only nominally anxious for the salvation of his children, but really so, often says to himself, “ Yes, I see it ; I feel it ; I own it ; my children are immortal creatures ; their souls are intrusted to my care, and will be required at my hands, and their salvation depends much upon me. Then, by God’s grace, ‘ this one thing I do, ’ I will make their salvation, above all things besides, the object of my desire, of my pursuit, and of my prayer. I will neglect nothing that can conduce to their respectability, comfort, and usefulness in this world ; but above, and beyond this, I will chiefly desire and do whatever can conduce to the salvation of their souls. Their religious character shall be, in my estimation with reference to them, the one thing needful. What shall I do, what can I do, that they might be saved ? ” Ah, this is it ; an ever wakeful concern for their eternal welfare, an inventive solicitude for their immortal destiny ; a determined, reso-

lute subordination of everything else to this as the supreme object. Such a solicitude as never sleeps, nor tires ; such a solicitude as leads, like all other anxieties, to the right use of means. Not merely *a* concern, but *the* concern ; not one among many objects, but *the* one great, commanding, controlling, absorbing object ; which, if it be not gained, makes a father or a mother mourn over the highest degree of worldly prosperity to which a child can attain, and exclaim, “ Yes, he is successful for this world, and of course I am not insensible to the advantage of this ; but alas ! it is unsanctified prosperity, which I would gladly and gratefully exchange, on his behalf, for sanctified adversity.”

V. An earnest man will be *cautious to avoid mistakes* : he will say to any one who can give him information, “ Do guard me against error, that I may be kept from misspending my time, and misdirecting my labor.” Now there are some mistakes in education, against which the Christian parent should be cautioned, and against which he should most assiduously guard. A very common and a most fatal one is that the conversion of children is rather to be looked for as a sudden thing, which is to be expected as the result of some single event, such as a sermon, or an address, or a letter, or the perusal of a book, rather than from a systematic and continued course of instruction, discipline, and example. It is a very frequent, and I am afraid almost universal thing, for Christian parents to say to themselves, and sometimes as an excuse for their own indolence and neglect, “ We are taught that regeneration is a sudden and instantaneous change wrought by the Spirit of God ; and therefore, though my children exhibit no symptoms of religious concern at present, yet I hope the time will come, when, by the blessing of God upon some event, or some means or other, they will be brought suddenly and at once to decision. Perhaps it may be at school, for I have selected pious instructors ; or it may be by the preaching of the gospel, for they hear very faithful and energetic ministers ; or it may be by some visitation of God in the way of bodily sickness. I live in hope that the good time will

come when I shall yet see them converted to God." And perhaps all this while there is no systematic course of instruction and of discipline going on at home, so that their religious character is left to whatever contingencies may arise. Fatal delusion! False reasoning! Ruinous mistake! It is very true that in some cases conversion is sudden, but this is such a perversion of the fact as involves not only mistakes, but criminality. If it is sudden, how do such parents know but that the very next efforts which they themselves make may be the happy means of effecting it; and ought they not, upon their own principle, to be ever laboring for, and ever expecting, the blessed result? The fact is, it means nothing less than an indolent handing over of the religious education of their children to school-masters, to ministers, to friends, to whomsoever will undertake it, and even to chance, so as they may be rid of the trouble. A parent who has right views of his relationship, and his responsibility, will say, "I may commit the *general* education of my children to others, but not their religious training. This is too momentous to be intrusted out of my own hands. Others may be ignorant, negligent, or erroneous: I must see, therefore, to this matter myself. I cannot transfer my relation or my responsibility, and I will not transfer my exertions. God will require my children at my hands, and as I cannot reckon with him by proxy, so I will not work by proxy. And I will endeavor, by God's grace, to form their religious character by a system and a course of moral training, and not look for it as a sudden result of passing incidents." This is a correct view of the subject, and the *only* correct one. Sudden conversions do often take place in those who have not enjoyed the advantages of a religious education, but rarely in those who have. In the latter case there is often a gradual change of character and conduct, the effect of good training, which issues at last in regeneration; and in some few, rare instances, of the conversion to God of the children of judicious, earnest Christians, the change has been so gradual as to be scarcely perceptible. Were all Christian parents to act in the same way, the same results

might with good reason be expected, and domestic education would be the ordinary means of conversion for the children of the godly. There is more truth in the proverb, even as regards religion, than many persons are disposed to allow, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." This does not *insure* success in *every* instance, but it warrants the *expectation* of it, and should make the want, and not the acquisition, of it, matter of surprise. In all scriptural means of conversion, there is an *adaptation* to the end to be accomplished, though there is no *necessary connection* between them, and were right means always used, efficiency would more frequently be the result than it now is. This is especially true of *religious* education. Let parents give up all dependence upon teachers and ministers, though thankfully availing themselves of their collateral aid, and consider that *they* are the persons to be looked to as the instruments of their children's conversion; and at the same time let them abandon the expectation of sudden conversions by contingent circumstances, and look for this blessed result from the grace of God upon a system of instruction and discipline begun early, extending through everything, and carried on with judgment, perseverance, and prayer, and then they will see, much more frequently than they now do, the happy consequences of this holy training of the youthful mind for God.

A second mistake in religious education is *putting off the commencement of it too long*. Earnestness means seizing the first opportunity that occurs for doing a thing, and, indeed, a looking out, and waiting, for the first season of action. "Begin yourself, begin well, and begin soon," are the maxims of common sense, which apply to everything, and especially to religion. Evil is already in the heart at birth, and begins to grow with the child's mental growth, strengthens with his strength, and must be resisted by early endeavors to root it out, and to plant and nourish good. Most parents begin too late. They have let Satan get beforehand with them, and have suffered corruption to grow too long and get too much strength

before they attack it. Half the failures in religious education, yea, a far greater proportion, may be traced up to this cause. Temper can be disciplined, conscience may be exercised, subordination may be inculcated, and the consequences of disobedience felt, long before the child can receive what might be called religious instruction.

A third mistake to be avoided is *making religious instruction a thing by, and for, itself*, and not sustaining it by other things which are related to it, and which have considerable influence upon it. Earnestness presses everything into its service, and avoids whatever would defeat its end. A person intent upon some object which is considered to be of importance, will sustain his pursuit of it, by attending to whatever will aid his endeavors, and will carefully watch against everything which would impede his progress, or defeat his purpose. It were to be wished that Christian parents would act upon this principle, and call in the aid of whatever could promote their one great object. With many, it is to be feared, religious education is nothing more than a mere *patch* upon a system of training, a bit sewed on, and not an integral part of the whole, the very warp of the texture. For instance, they will teach a little religion occasionally, and perhaps frequently, and somewhat seriously; but all this while will take no pains to inculcate obedience to themselves, to discipline the temper, to cultivate habits of application, to produce thoughtfulness, kindness, and general good behavior. When a farmer wishes to produce a good crop, he not only prepares the ground, and sows good seed, but he takes care that the young corn shall enjoy every advantage for growth; and knowing that weeds will stifle it, and drain away its nourishment, and keep out the sun's rays, he takes care to clear the ground of these. So it is with the earnest parent; he not only communicates religious instruction, and thus sows the good seed, but he takes care to keep down the weeds, and to do all he can to aid the growth of the plant. Some very good people have erred here; they have taught, and entreated, and prayed; and then wondered that their children do not become truly pious; but their excessive

indulgence, their injudicious fondness, their utter neglect of all discipline, the relaxation of their authority their neglect of themselves till the children have been taught to consider that *they*, and not their parents, were the most important personages in the household, might explain to them, as these things do explain to others, the cause of failure. If general excellence of disposition and character be not cultivated along with that which is specifically religious, the latter will make but slow and sickly growth.

The last mistake in religious education to which I shall refer, and which an earnest parent must avoid, is the confounding instruction with education; that is, mistaking a part for the whole; the means for the end. What, in the estimation of many, is religious education? Nothing more than the communication of so much religious knowledge — a little Scripture, a few hymns, or a catechism, committed to memory. Alas! even this is not done in the families of some professors; and I have heard an anxious and accomplished president of a lady's school express her grief and astonishment at the deplorable ignorance of the very elements of biblical knowledge of some of her pupils who have come from the families of professors of religion. Some of the children of the higher classes in our Sunday schools would put to the blush many of these young ladies of our boarding schools. And even the more diligent parents are but too apt to stop in the mere communication of knowledge; but this is not education in the more comprehensive sense of the word, which means the formation of character. And from the same quarter as I have just mentioned, I have heard a most emphatic testimony borne to the anxious and judicious care to form the character which appears to be bestowed at home, upon their children, by that respectable body of professing Christians, called Quakers. None have been better trained, she has informed me, than those who have come to her from such families. There is a habit of thoughtfulness, by no means gloomy, or unaccompanied with cheerfulness; a sense of propriety, without any such stiffness as is gen

erally supposed to appertain to these young persons ; and a respectful submissiveness, which are not found in most others ; together with a soundness of judgment, which afford admirable specimens of good domestic training. The fact is that some of what are called the *accomplishments* of fashionable and elegant education are banished from the families of the Quakers to make way for the cultivation of the mind and heart, and the formation of the character. There may be, and I think there are, among them, omissions which I should supply ; but for the inculcation of habits of reflection, good sense, general propriety of conduct, orderliness and control of the temper and passions, most parents may take a lesson from the home education of Quaker children.

Now observe the conduct of earnest parents. In addition to the communication of knowledge, they admonish, entreat, warn, and counsel. They direct the reading of their children, and watch carefully what books come into their hands. They analyze their character, and make themselves intimately acquainted with their peculiarities of disposition and tendencies, that they may know how to adapt their treatment to each. They encourage habits of subjection, modesty, reflection, conscientiousness, frankness, and at the same time, respect for all, especially for themselves. They dwell on the pleasures of religion, and the miseries of sin. They repress faults, and encourage budding excellences. They speak to them of the honor and happiness of good men, not only in another world, but in this. They endeavor to implant the fear of God, the love of Christ, the desire of holiness, in their hearts. Everything is done to render religion attractive, and yet to exhibit it as a holy and an awful reality. They watch the conduct, look out for matter of commendation and of censure. In short, their object and aim are the real, right, permanent formation of the religious character, the character of the genuine Christian.

Parents, you are always educating your children for good or evil. Not only by what you say, but by what you do ; not only by what you intend, but by what you are : you yourself are one constant lesson, which many

eyes are observing, and which many hearts receive into itself. Influence, power, impulse, are ever going out from you : take care then how you act !

Let me, then, here remind you of the immense importance of three things : first, Parental *Example*. What example is so powerful as that of a parent ? It is one of the first things which a child observes ; it is that which is most constantly before his eyes, and it is that which his very relationship inclines him most attentively to respect, and most assiduously to copy. Every act of parental kindness, every effort to please, every favor conferred, softens a child's heart to receive the impressions which such an example is likely to stamp upon the soul. Vain, worse than useless, is that instruction which is not followed up by example. Good advice, when not illustrated by good conduct, inspires disgust. There are multitudes of parents to whom we would deliberately give the counsel never to say one syllable to their children on the subject of religion, unless they enforce what they say by a better example. Silence does infinitely less mischief than the most elaborate instruction which is all counteracted by inconsistent conduct. It is no matter, either of wonder or regret, that some professing Christians discontinue family prayer. How can they act the part of a hypocrite so conspicuously before their households, as to pray in the evening, when every action of the day has been so opposed to every syllable of their prayer ? O, what consistent and uniform piety, what approaches to perfection, ought there to be in him who places himself twice every day before his household, at the family altar, as their prophet, priest, and intercessor with God ! It seems to me as if the holiest and best of us were scarcely holy enough to sustain the parental character, and discharge the parental functions. It would seem as if this were a post for which we could be fitted only by being first raised to the condition of spirits made perfect, and then becoming again incarnate, with celestial glory beaming around our character. What an additional motive is there in this view of our duty for cultivating, with a more intense earnestness, the spirit of personal religion !

Would you see the result of parental misconduct, look into the family of David. Eminent as he was for the spirit of devotion, sweet as were the strains which flowed from his inspired muse, and attached as he was to the worship of the sanctuary, yet what foul blots rested upon his character, and what dreadful trials did he endure in his family! What profligate creatures were his sons! and who can tell how much the apostacy of Solomon was to be traced up to the recollection of parental example! Parents, beware, I beseech you, how you act! O let your children see religion in all its sincerity, power, beauty, and loveliness; and this may win them to Christ.

But there is another thing to be observed, and that is the mischief of *excessive indulgence*. Read the history of Eli, as recorded by the pen of inspiration. The honors of the priesthood and of the magistracy lighted upon him. He was beloved and respected by the nation whose affairs he administered, and to all appearance seemed likely to finish a life of active duty, in the calm repose of an honored old age. But the evening of his life, at one time so calm and so bright, became suddenly overcast, and a storm arose which burst in fury upon his head, and dashed him to the ground by its dreadful bolts. Whence did it arise? Let the words of the historian declare: "I have told him, said the Lord, that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not." 1 Sam. iii. 13. Poor old man! who can fail to sympathize with him under the terror of that dreadful sentence, which crushed his dearest hopes and beclouded all his prospects? but the sting, the venom of the sentence, was in the declaration that a criminal unfaithfulness on his part had brought upon his beloved sons ruin both temporal and eternal. All this destruction upon his children, all this misery upon himself, was the consequence of weak and criminal parental indulgence. Doubtless this began while they were yet children; their every wish and every whim were indulged, their foolish inclinations were gratified; he could never be persuaded that any germs of malignant passions lurked

under appearances so playful and so lovely ; he smiled at transgressions on which he ought to have frowned ; and instead of endeavoring kindly but firmly to eradicate the first indications of pride, anger, ambition, deceit, self-will, and stubbornness, he considered they were but the wild flowers of spring, which would die of themselves as the summer advanced. The child grew in this hot-bed of indulgence into the boy ; the boy into the youth ; the youth into the young man ; till habit had confirmed the vices of the child, and acquired a strength which not only now bid defiance to parental restraint, but laughed it to scorn. Contemplate the poor old man sitting at the wayside upon his bench, in mute despair, his heart torn with self-reproach, there listening with sad presages for tidings from the field of conflict. At length the messenger arrives—the doleful news is told. The ark of God is taken, and Hophni and Phinehas are slain. His aged heart is broken—and he and his whole house are crushed at once under that one sin, the excessive weakness and wickedness of a false and foolish parental indulgence.*

Parents, and especially mothers, look at this picture and tremble ! contemplate this sad scene, and learn the necessity of a judicious, affectionate, firm, and persevering discipline !

To all this add earnest, believing, and persevering *prayer*. Let family devotion be maintained with regularity, variety, affectionate simplicity, and great seriousness. As conducted by some, it is calculated rather to disgust than to delight. It is so hastily, so perfunctorily, and so carelessly performed, that it seems rather a mockery than a solemnity ; there is neither seriousness nor earnestness. On the other hand, how subduing and how melting are the fervent supplications of a godly and consistent father, when his voice, tremulous with emotion, is giving utterance to the desires of his heart to the God of heaven, for the children bending around

* There is a beautiful sermon on this subject by Dr. Leland, of Charleston, in the "American Preacher."

him! Is there, out of heaven, a sight more deeply interesting than a family gathered at morning or evening prayer, where the worship is what it ought to be? When the good man takes the "big ha' Bible," and with patriarchal grace reads to his household the words of heavenly truth? And then the hymn of domestic gladness, in which even infants learn to lisp their Maker's praise; not better music is there to the ears of Jehovah, in the seraphim's song, than that concord of sweet sounds; and last of all the prayer — oh, that strain of intercession in which each child seems to hear the throbbing of a father's heart for *him*! Ah, when this is the type of the families of professors; when family religion is conducted after this fashion; when the spectator of what is going on in such households shall be compelled to say, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" when earnestness, after beginning in the soul of the Christian, shall communicate itself to the parent, what a new state of things may we expect in the church of Christ!

In my volume addressed to the ministry I remarked that the conversion of the children of the pious should be looked for at home, and from the blessing of God on the endeavors of Christian parents. And this is quite true, and a truth which cannot be put forward too prominently, or enforced upon public attention too urgently. I cannot be supposed to underrate the importance of the pulpit nor the value of preaching; but it is possible so to exalt this order of means as to depress, if not to displace, all others. God never intended by preaching to subvert or set aside the domestic constitution, or to silence the voice of the parental teacher. All systems that obtrude *any* one, whether priest, preacher, or schoolmaster, between the parent and his child, so as to merge the obligations of the latter in the functions of the former, are opposed alike to nature and to revelation. God will hold every parent responsible for the instruction of his children, and it will be no excuse for the neglect, that he has handed them over to another. One of the earliest and most certain indications of a revived church

will be, the marked revival of domestic religion. Whatever stir be made congregationally, or ministerially, will still leave the church but partially awakened, and religion but negligently attended to, till the families of the righteous are become the scenes of religious concern and of spiritual instruction. The canon of the Old Testament closes with these remarkable words, "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Mal. iv. 6. Under the Christian dispensation the children were to be brought in with their fathers, and through their instrumentality; and whenever, throughout the various churches of Christ, we shall be favored to see those who sustain the relation of parents intensely earnest for the salvation of their children, and adopting all proper means for that end, then shall we see the blissful sight of fathers leading their sons, and mothers their daughters, and bringing their children to the church for membership, saying, "Behold, I and the children thou hast given me." Then would the families of the saints present the beautiful scene, more than once spoken of in the New Testament, of a church in the house.

This state of things will, perhaps, in some measure, account for a very painful fact, which both parents and ministers attest and lament, that very few of the *sons* of our more *wealthy members* become truly pious. Many of the daughters are brought under the influence of true piety, and come into our fellowship, but comparatively few of the sons. I am aware that, as a general fact, far more women are pious than men; but the disproportion is, I think, still greater in the class to which I now allude than in any other. Many concurring causes will account for this. Young men go out into the world, and are exposed to its temptations, while the daughters remain at home under the sheltering care of their parents. It requires greater moral courage in a young man to profess religion, than in a female. Young men are more swallowed up in business, and have their minds more drawn away from religion by this means. They are

more exposed to the influence of bad companions, and are more in the way of being injured by scepticism and heresy. They are allured to out-of-door recreations and games, which lead them into company. And from the fact of a large proportion of pious people being females, young men are carried away with the shallow and flip-pant notion, that religion is a matter pertaining to the weaker sex, rather than to them. These things will account for the fact to which I now allude, which is indeed a very painful one. Our churches and our institutions need the aid of pious young men of this class. We know the soul of a female is as precious in the sight of God as one of the opposite sex, and we know how valuable are female influence and agency in all religious matters; but women cannot be in such things a substitute for men; and, therefore, we do lament that so few of our respectable young men become truly pious.

To what use ought this painful fact to be turned, and to what specific efforts should it give rise? First of all it should lead Christian parents to pay a more diligent and anxious attention to the religious education of their *sons*. Daughters must not be neglected, but *sons must have special pains taken with them*. As in good agriculture most labor is bestowed on an unproductive soil, to make it yield a crop, so in this religious culture of the heart, the main solicitude should be directed to the boys. Mothers, I beseech you, look to these, and from the very dawn of reason exert your plastic influence over their more sturdy nature. Be anxious for your sons; think of their danger and their difficulty. Imagine sometimes that you see that lovely boy a future prodigal, lost to himself, to his parents, to the church, and to society, and yourself dying under the sorrows of a heart broken by his misconduct; at other times, look upon the enrapturing picture of his rising up to be a minister of religion, or the deacon of a church, foremost in aiding the religious institutions of the day, and yielding the profits of a successful business to the cause of God in our dark world. Oh, dedicate that boy to God, with all the fullness of a mother's love, both for him and for his Lord,

and pour over him all the influences of a mother's judicious care and culture. Fathers, I say to you, also, look well to your sons; be doubly solicitous, and doubly laborious, and doubly prayerful, in reference to them. Be the friend, the companion, the counsellor of your sons, as well as their father. Be intensely solicitous to see them not only by your side in the counting-house, or the warehouse, but in the church of Christ, and in the transactions of our religious societies.

Mothers, much devolves on you. Both among the rational and irrational tribes, the first training of the infant race belongs to her that gives them being, and supports them; and of course the first yearnings of affection, and ever the strongest, are to her. It is her privilege, and her reward for pains, and privations, and labors, all her own, to be thus rewarded by the earliest and most earnest aspirations of the heart. Avail yourselves of this bliss, and the influence it gives you, to mould the infant heart and character for God. Let a mother's vigilance, and care, and affection, all be most earnestly consecrated to the blessed work of sowing the seeds of piety in childhood's heart, and thus forming the young immortal. Scarcely a character of eminence has ever appeared, either in the church or in the state, but confessed his obligations to a judicious mother. Pious mothers have done more to people heaven than any other class of persons, next to the preachers of the gospel; and even the usefulness of ministers must be shared with those who had prepared the minds of their converts to receive impressions from their sermons. Napoleon once asked Madam Campan what the French nation most wanted. Her reply was compressed into one word—"Mothers." It was a wise, beautiful, and comprehensive answer. Ask me what the church of God wants next to earnest ministers, and I answer—*intelligent, pious, earnest* MOTHERS.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ACTIVITY OF CHURCHES IN THEIR COLLECTIVE CAPACITY ; OR, THE DILIGENCE OF CHRISTIANS CONSIDERED AS CHURCH MEMBERS.

THE word church is now used in its limited sense, as restricted to one assembly or congregation. It here means a regularly organized body, meeting with its office-bearers in one place for divine worship. And we are now, therefore, to show in what manner the earnestness of such a community is to show itself.

There must, of course, be an intelligent and pervading apprehension amongst its members of its design as being, next to its own eternal well-being, a witness for God in the world, and his instrument for spreading the truth. This ought to be a well understood, deeply rooted, and constantly recognized principle. All the members ought perpetually and conscientiously to bear in mind this their high vocation, as a testifying, proselyting body, and stir up each other's minds to carry out this their sacred and common purpose. They must not allow one another to forget that, as a part of the universal church, they are a collective and embodied testimony to the existence, nature, will, and works of God.

To this must be added a consciousness of the great spiritual power for accomplishing this end, which is contained in a church of Christ ; a power of which it ought to be, but is not, duly sensible. There is moral power in truth, in example, in prayer, in exertion. All these combine in every sincere, consistent Christian. Each believer in Christ is an instrument of great power in our world, or *has* great power in himself. He has a greater force of character than he has ever yet put forth, or has known himself to possess. Think what one Christian

has, in some extraordinary cases, achieved! What an immense power, then, must there be in a church consisting of one, three, five, or seven hundred members! Take even a small church of only one hundred, and imagine them all eminently holy, benevolent, and active, scattered all over the place in which they dwell, each a radiating point of light and influence in the neighborhood where he lives. And then conceive of them collecting together periodically in their church relationship, to be seen as a body of witnesses for God, and to be acted upon by ministerial exercises and mutual influence; keeping each other up to the standard of obligation and the measure of duty. Let it be supposed that they were filled with this idea of spiritual power; that they assembled in their collective capacity, to quicken and renew it, and then dispersed to employ it in their several localities.

There must, also, be a deep solicitude in each church to answer the end of its formation, both in reference to its own internal state and its external relations.

The active operations of a church may be classed under several heads: the FIRST class includes whatever appertains to its own welfare. For this must, of course, take precedence of all other duties. It is only as it is itself in a good, sound, healthy, and working condition, that it can expect to be of any service to others. A state, as well as a church, must be strong internally, or it can have no power to be beneficial to others.

Every member of every community is supposed to feel, and to take, *a deep interest in its welfare*. The welfare of the whole depends upon the solicitous endeavor to promote it, on the part of its individual members. There is a common interest, and there must be a common activity to uphold it. Thus must it be with all church members; they must have an earnest, jealous, and ever-wakeful solicitude for the well-being of the church to which they belong. They are not, indeed, to cherish an isolated, selfish spirit, which shuts up all its concern within their own congregation, but this is to be the object of their first and chief anxiety. It is their religious home, and every man's concern is to begin with

home. It is not enough that they are cordially attached to the pastor, and take an interest in his comfort and usefulness; they must also feel an interest in the *church*. There can be no doubt that many of our members almost drop the church, and confine all their concern to the minister. They rarely ever attend the church-meetings, though they are always, or usually, present in the sanctuary: they know scarcely any of their fellow-members, and take little interest in their spiritual welfare, however intimate they are with the pastor: they are well pleased to see a good congregation on the Sabbath, though they scarcely ever inquire about additions to the church. They are like the inhabitants of a country who have a personal attachment to the sovereign, but take no interest in the welfare of the nation. Such persons are not actually in fellowship, for they feel none; their names are upon the church books, but their hearts are certainly not in church communion. There is no earnestness here. No brotherly love is in operation.

A church should endeavor most diligently *to carry out the ends of fellowship*, which are mutual love, watchfulness, and helpfulness.

LOVE is the law of Christ's kingdom, the badge of his subjects, and the evidence of his mission; but there is not yet exhibited the intensity of affection among church members which answers this design. Brother-love is yet far too feeble in its exercise. The church is sadly deficient in this lovely grace. The world does not yet see her invested with this heavenly beauty, and therefore does not feel her power as it would otherwise do. When the earnestness of love shall come, when they who look into the "spiritual house" shall see there a scene of holy activity, and all the assiduities of a divine friendship, they will begin to think differently of the Christian religion from what they now do. For want of more of this love, there is not the WATCHFULNESS over one another there should be, nor the disposition to bear one another's burdens. We are brought into fellowship, not that we might act as spies upon each other, and wait for a brother's halting, but that we might perform with the tenderest

affection the part of monitors, and prevent each other from falling. We ought to feel it a most solemn and sacred duty to gather the stumbling-blocks out of each other's path, and prevent as far as possible even a trip in the way of godliness. Then is a church in a happy state when the members are observed watching in love, with a trembling solicitude, over each other's welfare, and not sparing, when it is needed, the voice of friendly warning, or even the language of faithful reproof. Where there is love there will also be ASSISTANCE; sympathy in affliction, congratulation in prosperity, relief in want, counsel in perplexity, and visits in distress. What a lovely scene would be presented to our selfish world, if the church of Christ were really in earnest to put forth in its conduct, as it is bound to do, "the charity that suffereth long, and is kind; that envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; that doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things." Whatever else there may be, there is no real earnestness where there is no prevailing anxiety thus to carry out the ends of fellowship, and to let the world "see how these Christians love one another."

1. One of the first duties which a church owes to itself, is an intelligent, firm, and charitable zeal for the principles on which it is founded, both doctrines, and also such as relate to ecclesiastical polity. After what has been said in reference to the former, in the remarks on the epistles to the seven churches, it is not necessary to enlarge upon it here, any further than to remark, that it is of infinite importance for the churches to hold fast "the form of sound words," and not to be carried about with every wind of false doctrine, by which the spiritual atmosphere is so frequently disturbed. Truth is the food of piety, and error its poison. There can be no sound spiritual health apart from sound doctrine. And yet it is affecting to perceive how lightly, in this age of spurious candor and philosophic taste, of diminished spirituality and increased worldliness, some of the fundamental doctrines

are held, and how easily the transfer is made by some professors from one set of opinions to another. Let the members of our churches, then, look vigilantly after each other, and sustain each other in the profession of the faith. Let them not sacrifice the truth for talent, and be content with whatever deficiencies may exist with regard to the former, provided it is made up by a supply of the latter. Nothing can be, or ought to be, a substitute for the evangelical system. Eloquent, but vague generalities, which would suit the taste, and not offend the prejudices, of a congregation of Unitarians or mere theists, should not satisfy an orthodox congregation; and let them be careful how they choose a man who, even in his probationary sermons, seems to have come from Athens, rather than Jerusalem; and to have brought them the enticing words of man's wisdom, instead of the doctrine of the cross, which is the power of God unto salvation. No brilliancy of genius, no fluency of speech, no power of oratory, should reconcile them to a suspicion of error, or even deficiency of evangelical truth. The life and vigor of godliness can never be maintained by mere talent, in the absence of sound doctrine: and, indeed, the greater the talent the greater the danger, especially when such talent appears not only in alienation from, but in hostility to, the truth as it is in Jesus. It is a portentous sign for a Christian community, when it can be satisfied with mere displays of talent in the absence of scriptural truth.

Nor is it about doctrine only that our congregations should be in earnest, but about *matters of polity* also. Church government, though not everything, nor the most important thing, is still something, and a *great* thing too. It is a matter deeply affecting, in one way or other, not only the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, but the interests of evangelical religion; it is a help or a hindrance, accordingly as it is conformed or opposed to the model set up in the New Testament; and is therefore worthy all the zeal, apart however from the bitterness, of sectarianism, which has been manifested on its behalf. To reduce to nonentities, as regards value and importance, the question about established or non-established churches, or concern-

ing Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and Independency, is a spurious and unauthorized latitudinarianism, as remote from a due regard to the authority of Christ in his word, on the one hand, as a bitter and venomous sectarianism is on the other. If *Congregationalists* are indifferent to their principles, they are the only body that are so. The advocates of other systems leave us no room to doubt of their earnestness, nor ought we to leave them in any doubt of ours. The principles which apostles taught, which reformers revived, and for which martyrs bled, ought not to be regarded with indifference by us. If they are not matters of conscience, they ought to be abandoned, since it is hardly worth while to stand in a state of separation for matters of mere taste or feeling; and if they are, then let them be held, as *all* matters of conscience ought to be, with a grasp that relaxes not even in death itself. If important to us, they are important to others, and ought to be propagated, as well as held. Liberty to hold an opinion is but the half of freedom, unless there be liberty to diffuse it. What I plead for on our own behalf, I plead for on behalf of all others. Only let us unstring controversy; only let us speak the truth in love; only let us controvert as brethren, and not as enemies; only let us contend for truth, not for victory; only let us carry on our contests about minor matters, with the recollection that we are agreed on greater ones; only let us wrestle for church polity within sight of the cross, which makes us all one, and of the heaven where we shall feel as one; only let us argue and expostulate as we should with a brother we most tenderly loved, about something he held, which we thought was doing him harm — and then we may be as zealous as we please about church government. If by an earnest dissenter be meant, not a bigoted, uncandid, or pugnacious one, but an intelligent preference founded on conviction, the holding fast of his opinions without any compromise, and a zeal in spreading them, which, though it affects no neutrality, yet neither violates the courtesy of the gentleman, the calmness of the philosopher, nor the charity of the Chris-

tian — then may all dissenters be thus in earnest, yes, and all churchmen too.

2. As the welfare of the church depends, under God's blessing, upon the labors of the pastor; and as the energy and efficiency of his labors depend upon the state of his own mind, it is indispensably necessary that he should be kept as free as possible from all solicitude about pecuniary matters. There are few matters about which the spirit of liberality in this age has been less conversant or less anxious, than the adequate and comfortable support of the ministry at home; and as a consequence, there are few functionaries so ill-supported as they on whom, under God, the whole cause of evangelization depends. Secretaries of societies, missionaries to the heathen, and schoolmasters, are all better paid, and have a more ample provision made for their comfort, than the preachers of Christ's blessed gospel. Preached sermons are the cheapest of all cheap things, in this age of exceeding cheapness. And yet what invaluable blessings have these sermons been to multitudes! By only *one* of them, in many cases, persons have been converted to God, and enriched with eternal salvation; many have been relieved of burdens of care which were crushing them to the earth; others have been rescued from a temptation which would have ruined them for both worlds; and myriads have been delivered from the fear of death, and enabled to go on their way rejoicing, even through the dark valley itself. Yes, by a single sermon all this has in many cases been accomplished. What, then, shall be said of *all* the sermons of a whole year, or a whole life? Think of this, and say whether a payment of ten shillings or a pound a year, is an adequate remuneration to the man who consumes his life in study and in labor for the purpose of conferring such benefits as these? Is it not next to a miracle for a man to be all energy, activity, and earnestness, in his ministry, whose mind is bowed down with solicitude how to provide bread for his family, and at the same time to provide also for things honest in the sight of all men? Christians, you want your pastor to *run* in the way of God's commandments to his ministers; then take off, by your

liberality, the burden under which he can scarcely *walk o stand*. You complain that his sermons are poor and meagre: is it not your own fault, by keeping him so poor and meagre in his wardrobe, and in his larder, that the time which should, and would, have been spent in study, has been consumed in endeavoring to get that bread for his babes, with which you ought to have supplied him? If we would have earnest churches, I know very well we must have earnest ministers; but then, if we would have earnest ministers, we must have liberal churches. What is wanted, is a provision for our pastors which shall not be so profuse as to be a temptation to luxurious indolence, and yet so ample as to raise them above anxiety.

3. If it be incumbent upon a church to provide for the *comfort* of a pastor, how much more so for his *usefulness*, by improving, enlarging, or rebuilding, when his success requires it, the house in which he ministers. Happily, there is not, in the present day, much need for dilating upon this subject. One of the delightful features of this age is a noble spirit of liberal activity, at which our forefathers, were they to come back to life, would be astonished. The voluntary principle is doing wonders in this way, within the pale of dissent, and far greater wonders beyond it. Under its potency, inconvenient, dilapidated, and old-fashioned buildings have given place to modern, elegant, and commodious edifices, in beautiful symmetry with the improved taste of the day; and others have sprung up where there were none before. Parliamentary grants have been found to be unnecessary, and church rates, extorted by force and paid with reluctance, have been in many places superseded by a spontaneous liberality. Still, it is not in every congregation we witness this generous activity, and churches are yet to be found, where, through an almost superstitious regard for the places where their fathers worshipped, the present congregation are unwilling to touch a brick or a plank, and are well-nigh ready to let the roof fall in and bury them, out of reverence for antiquity; or else, out of niggardly regard to their purse, they are content to let a faithful

minister who has ability to preach to a crowd who are anxious to hear him, go on ministering to a small congregation, for which a man possessed of less than half his zeal or talent might suffice. I have known cases that answer to both these hindrances to enlargements and reërections, where the predilections for the antique have stifled the nobler predilections for the useful, and the ghosts of departed saints have been evoked to pronounce it sacrilege to demolish the pew in which they once offered up their prayers to God ; whereas, if the men themselves could have been really there, they would have said, — “ Down with it, every stone, to make way for a place where more souls might hear the gospel and be converted to God.” Wealthy men have sometimes opposed the rebuilding of a place of worship, because they would be expected to set the example of liberality, and give more than their love of money would find it agreeable to spare ; and I have known opposition raised by poor, would-be gentlemen, because they could not give, and yet had not the courage or the honesty to confess their poverty. It is a gratifying spectacle, and, thanks to the Giver of all grace, not unfrequently witnessed, to see a church, not perhaps rich in this world’s goods, blessed with a pious, zealous, and successful ministry, and all activity, all liberality, all earnestness, to enlarge the sphere of his usefulness by building him a new and more commodious place of worship. I have been the witness of some such cases, which are as much beyond the belief, as of the practice, of those who are taught by system to rely on the compulsion of law, or the munificence of parliament, for their places of divine worship.

4. A general, regular, and punctual attendance upon all the means of grace is essential to the earnestness of a Christian church. There is a wonderful difference in this respect in the various congregations of professing Christians. In some instances you will see the hearers straggling along with a dull and careless look, as if they were going to an unwelcome service ; dropping into the place of worship long after the service has commenced ; looking round with vacant stare upon the congregation, undevout

and listless, as if they were there, they knew nor cared for why ; the seats half empty, and those that occupied them seemingly neither expecting nor desiring a blessing from above. There is no earnestness there. In other cases, how different ! you will observe a stream of people, just *before* the hour of service, flowing into the place, with a serious, thoughtful, yet cheerful air, as if they knew what they were going for, and that it was a solemn, yet gladsome occasion. They take their seats with a composed, collected, devout manner. A look of expectation is in their eye, which is first cast towards the pulpit, as if they waited for the preacher, with his message from God, and then upward to that God who alone can make the message effectual. A stranger coming in, is struck with the appearance of earnestness that pervades the congregation, and almost involuntarily exclaims, — “ How dreadful is this place ! surely this *is* the house of God, and the gate of heaven.” Yes, and if he were to visit that place time after time, he would see the same scene repeated ; the same seats occupied by the same people, and in the same devout manner. The earnest hearer is the constant hearer, the punctual hearer, the devout hearer. There is a spirit of indolence, self-indulgence, and mischievous negligence, creeping over the churches, most fatal to fervent devotion, in reference even to the Sabbath-day attendance, which is rising out of the modern taste for residing in the country. Very many of the members of our religious communities, of all denominations, go but once a week to the house of God ; and this is on a Sabbath morning. All the rest of the holy day is spent in idleness, perhaps feasting and lounging over the wine through the afternoon, turning over the pages of a magazine, with little devotion, and with no profit, in the evening. If these persons were in their closets, studying the Word of God, engaged in self-examination and prayer, mortifying their corruptions, and invigorating their graces, we should think less of it — but *is* this their occupation ? I fear this love of ease is eating out the piety of our churches, and gradually turning the Sabbath into a day of luxurious repose, instead of Christian devotion.

Modern tastes are sadly at war with modern piety. It seems as if many of the professing Christians of the day were trying with how little attendance upon the ordinances of public worship, how little of self-denial, and how little a public manifestation of their religion, they could satisfy their conscience — and, alas! how *very* little that is!

But this is not all — earnestness is displayed more commonly by the week-day attendance than the Sabbath congregations. A professor of religion who has the least regard for his reputation must be at public worship once on the Lord's day, but he has no great reason, as things exist, to fear for his religious reputation, at least in the estimation of many of his fellow-Christians, who are too much like him, though he is never present at a week-day service. There is a phenomenon in my own church which I scarcely know how to explain; I mean that the attendance upon weekly services does not increase with the augmentation of the church. I am not sure that we have more at a prayer meeting now, than we had when the church was only half its present number; and I observe that it is pretty nearly the same people who attend every time. This looks as if there were a great number of our members who have no sense of obligation to attend such services. But can we really consider those who habitually neglect them to be very lively Christians, or in any way advancing in the divine life, unless, indeed, there be any special and sufficient reasons for their absence? Earnestness manifests itself in the way of laborious effort, a willingness to make sacrifices, and a disposition to endure self-denial; and if it characterized the religion of a church, it would display itself in a willingness to put ourselves to some little personal inconvenience to attend the services of the week-days, as well as the Sabbath-days.

5. There ought to be a cordial coöperation with the pastor in all his labors for the salvation of souls. He must be sustained in his endeavors to draw people to hear the gospel. The plan of District Visiting Societies, adopted of late years by the evangelical portior of the

clergy of the Church of England, is an admirable one, by which Christian and matronly ladies go round to the habitations of the poor, relieving their temporal necessities, distributing religious tracts, selling Bibles, and urging the people to attend church. How can female influence be better employed? That there may be a little Church-of-Englandism, a little dread of dissenters, mixed up with this zeal, is very probable: but let dissenters then imitate the plan—let the ladies of *their* congregations commence similar efforts—let *them* form visiting societies to assist *their* pastors—let them go to those who attend no place of worship, and persuade them to come and hear *their* minister. It would be highly improper to tempt persons who already hear the gospel, to leave their own pastor, to come to theirs; but if they find people who go nowhere, and belong to nobody, let them not scruple to induce them to come to their own place of worship. There need be no delicacy, no scruple, no fastidiousness, here. Every pious churchman will allow, it is better these people should attend among dissenters, or methodists, than nowhere. There is no room for jealousy in these matters, while there are such millions in our country, who never go to public worship at all, and who, indeed, if all of them were disposed to do so, could not find sufficient places to receive them. If every congregation were really bent upon filling its place of worship, and were not to leave it all to their minister, they would soon accomplish the object, and be astonished to see what crowds could be gathered. Yet how many of our hearers are there who will go on complaining for years that their minister does not draw a congregation to hear him, while all this time they have never attempted to bring one single individual to listen to his sermons! What an immediate effect would be produced, if fifty earnest persons, or even ten, were to turn out, on a Sunday afternoon, to visit the streets, alleys, and courts in the vicinity of a place of worship, with a view to bring into it the persons who, in its very shadow, are neglecting to attend the house of God, to urge them to keep holy the Sabbath, and to seek the salvation of their immortal souls! We

can never denominate a body of Christians an earnest church till it is roused to make such efforts as these ; and till its members, such of them, at any rate, as have leisure, are thus exerting themselves to compel the neglecters of public worship to come in, that God's house might be full. There are some persons who are not satisfied with not helping their pastors, but who actually hinder them in their schemes for doing good. I know a minister, who, as his galleries and other parts of the chapel appropriated to the poor were not occupied as he wished, commenced an admirable course of sermons addressed to the laboring classes, with the special design of drawing their attention to his place of worship, and thus filling up the vacant seats. By many of the congregation, who entered into his views, and were anxious for his usefulness, the plan was approved ; but it will scarcely be credited, that by others it was disapproved of, and resented, because it took away from them an ordinary sermon, which they deemed more appropriate to themselves, than an address to the laboring classes.

A man of powerful eloquence and splendid talents will, by God's blessing upon his labors, raise a congregation anywhere, without much coöperation on the part of the people ; but such men are rare, and are not every day to be met with. Yet, without these qualifications, a man of good abilities, ardent piety, and great diligence, will also, by God's blessing, do anywhere, if he be sustained by the coöperation of a thoroughly working church. And it becomes our churches to recollect that such is now the competition of the different denominations, and such especially the activity and energy of the Church of England, that where the congregation is new, or small, or diminished, there is little hope of its being raised to anything like strength or stature, without the efforts of the whole body ; whilst, on the other hand, if these efforts are made, there is no ground for despair.

An earnest church, then, is one that is in such a state of activity as to be denominated a *thoroughly working church*. Its members will appear to be animated by one spirit, like the bees of a hive, all busy, each in his own

department, and all adding to the common stock. In a community of this description, there will be a place for everybody, and everybody will know and keep his place. Care should of course be taken by the pastor in receiving members to impress upon them the noble idea, that a desire and an effort to be useful is a part of religion; and he should also endeavor to ascertain the talents, capabilities, and tastes for usefulness, of all whom he admits, and then assign to each his proper place and appropriate labor. Over the portals of every church should be this inscription, "Let no one enter here who is not determined to be holy and useful."

In our large churches, an assistant minister, if not, a co-pastor, is very desirable, and is becoming more and more necessary, in consequence of the increased energy of the clergy of the Church of England. Our single-handed pastors can never, in matters out of the pulpit, cope with those who have one, two, or three curates employed under them. I am aware, that the Episcopal clergy have a mass of laborious duty, in the way of baptisms, marriages, visitation of the sick, and burials, which, except in a comparatively small amount, does not devolve upon us; but even in this our mitigated pressure the sick are too much neglected, inquirers overlooked, and the young left to themselves. The pulpit cannot, must not, be neglected; and yet how can this be duly regarded, and pastoral claims, with demands for public business, and the increased correspondence brought upon us by the penny postage, be attended to by any one man, however quick in the despatch of business, without assistance? We want help, and we must have it, or much of our work will be ill done, and much more left altogether undone. I do not forget the difficulties which present themselves; first of all on the ground of expense, and secondly on account of the probability of disagreement between the two ministers. To obviate the first of these is in the power, and ought to be in the will, of our people; and to meet the second, it might be well for the settled pastor to have the sole right of engaging and of dismissing the assistant, so as to be able at any time to stop incipient

mischief. It must be remembered, I am not now speaking of a co-pastor; when this is determined upon, it must be by the church, both as to the time *when* it is to be done, and the individual who is to be elected: but an assistant is a different matter, though even with reference to him, care should be taken, by the pastor, especially if the assistant is to take a part in pulpit labors, to select such an one as would be acceptable to the people. The reluctance of some of our pastors to adopt this plan, I know is very great, from the hazard which it brings to the peace of the church. I am very well aware there is *some* danger of this, for it has come under my own observation to see the jars and discords of *two* ministers, not only among ourselves as dissenters, but also in the Church of England. In the latter case, I admit, the risk is less, on account of the exclusion of the suffrages, power, and influence of the people; and this difficulty, in our case, it appears to me, would be in some measure obviated by allowing the pastor to select and dismiss his own assistant. Would it not be for the advantage of our young preachers, on leaving college, to finish their education for the pastorate under an experienced and successful minister? Time would thus be given to them to carry on their studies, and opportunity afforded to acquire a familiarity with the details of pastoral duties. This may be better than co-pastorships, except in those cases where an aged minister would gladly aid in choosing his successor, and would thus have a good opportunity for doing it.

Next to this, the DEACONS should be looked to for much more efficient assistance than they are in the habit of rendering. I allow that the original appointment of these went no further than for the care of the poor; but the customs of our churches have thrown many other things into their hands. These, or some other spiritual and experienced persons, should be found to help the pastor in the spiritual, more private, and individual duties of his office—such as conversing with inquirers, comforting the distressed, and guiding the perplexed. Unhappily our deacons are usually men much immersed in business, and who have little time for anything but

their own concerns; and more than this, some of them are men much called out for the business of the town in which they live. But considering how solemn and responsible a thing it is to bear office in the church of Christ, and how momentous a community the church of Christ is, they ought either to resign their office as deacons, if they cannot discharge its duties, or else withdraw their attention from public business. A deacon, next to the pastor, should be the most earnest member of the church. He should be all energy and devotedness, breathing by his words, and inspiring by his conduct, a spirit of love and activity into the souls of his fellow-members. He should be ardent, without being rash — active, without being obtrusive or officious — taking the lead not merely by choice, but by request — stirring up the liberality of the church by being first in all pecuniary exertions, and setting others on fire by the warmth of his own zeal. He should be his minister's counsellor, without being his dictator; his comforter, without being his flatterer; his helper, without being his master: and his friend, without being his partisan.

Still, as we cannot in all cases expect so much as this, or find all we could wish in deacons, there might be found in most of our churches a few spiritual and judicious persons who would be of essential service in the way of teaching some of our inquirers and young converts "the way of God more perfectly." It is painful to think how much religious impression is allowed to pass away, and how many deep and pungent convictions to be extinguished, for want of their being watched and cherished. There are many persons who would gladly avail themselves of the assistance of a kind-hearted, able, and willing instructor, guide, and comforter, though he were not an official. It is perfectly clear to any attentive student of the New Testament, that there was much more of division of labor in the primitive churches than there is in ours. If we refer to Rom. xii. 7, we find mention made of "ministering," "teaching," "exhortation," "ruling;" and it would seem as if these functions were severally discharged by different persons. So

again in 1 Cor. xii. 28, we read of "governments," and "helps," as of something distinct from "teachers." The meaning of the word "helps" is of very wide latitude, and as no hint whatever is given as to its precise application in this instance, we cannot determine to what function it refers. It was not probably a designation of an *office* in the usual acceptation of that word, but merely a description of persons whose zeal and ability rendered them of great use in a variety of ways to the regular officers of the church. Why have we not more of these "helps" now? — we certainly need them. And if we do not think it proper to revive the supposititious office of deaconesses, why may we not have a band of matronly females, eminent at once for their piety and prudence who shall be employed, without the formalities of office, but under appointment by the pastor and deacons, to visit the sick members of their own sex, and to aid in the way of Bible classes, the instruction of the young female inquirers. Perhaps the blame lies in the pastors, that more collateral help of this kind is not obtained and employed. We are not wise in our generation, by not finding out, and calling out, the help which must be contained in every large congregation. I never will or can believe that among those hundreds of enlightened minds, and renewed hearts, which are in our churches, there are not many who could, in various ways, be our assistants, and who would not rejoice on being solicited to give us their help.

A SECOND class of obligations and duties, in the way of active operations, which devolve upon a Christian community, are such as appertain to the neighborhood in which it is placed. Every church is to be a "light of the world," and the "salt of the earth," in reference to its own locality. It is to seek to exemplify this beautiful language of Jehovah, by the prophet, "I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." Ezek. xxxiv. 26.

It is now a universal custom for every congregation to have its Sunday school: this is considered so necessary

an adjunct that the congregation can scarcely be supposed to exist without it ; and an earnest church will be earnest in its support of this kind of agency, which is so necessary for the wants of the people, and the morals and religion of the nation. And yet how few churches, as such, and their pastors, take that lively interest in them which they ought. How common is it to leave the whole school to its own self-management, which is, in many cases, to leave it to the direction of a few boys and girls, who in general are but slenderly qualified even to be led, much less to be leaders. It is affecting to consider how these valuable institutions are often managed, or rather *mismanaged*. Not unfrequently have they punished both pastor and church that have neglected them, by becoming seats of disaffection to the one, and means of division to the other. Left to themselves, the teachers have formed a *fourth estate*, which has perplexed, if not overawed, the other three ; and yet, after all, they have been less to blame than the pastor, who thought them of too little consequence to be taken under his patronage, till their importance was felt in the way of mischief. A Sunday school is not so much a part of the congregation, as *another* congregation by itself, and is well deserving of the devoted attention of both the pastor and his flock. It were a thing to be greatly desired that none but truly pious members of the church should be employed as teachers, and of them none but the wisest and the best ; and it often appears for a wonder and a lamentation, that such an opportunity of doing good should be put aside by so many persons who see it constantly within their reach.

It is of immense consequence that to every Sunday school there should be the appendage of a *Bible class* for the senior boys and girls, into which the children should be introduced when they are too old to remain in the ordinary classes. The question has often been asked, what is the best plan for the treatment of the children who are of an age to leave the school ? What ? Strange that such a question *should* be asked ! The answer, however, is at hand ; form Bible classes, to be superin-

tended by some pious, judicious, and devoted persons, who shall give their hearts to the work, and who, with scriptural instruction, shall combine a devoted and assiduous attention to the formation of their general and religious character. I can speak from experience in recommending this scheme. We have long had such classes in our school, and blessed have been the results. It has been our felicity to have had ladies, and gentlemen too, who have given their time and labor to this work, and whose reward and happiness it is to see as members of the church, and as respectable members of society, many who were once under their care. One of the deacons of my church, a gentleman, whose mildness, intelligence and firmness, eminently qualified him for this work, was long engaged in it, and lately acknowledged to me that he believed he was never so useful as when he was thus engaged. Surely all our churches contain persons qualified for such employment, and could any object more gratifying to a holy ambition, more interesting to a benevolent heart, or more fascinating to a sanctified imagination, be presented, than such an occupation? There can be little earnestness, indeed, if such agency be wanting.

It is not Sunday schools alone that our churches must take up, but daily and infant schools; the former must not be neglected, so neither must they be substitutes for the latter. The cry of education is raised in our country, and a noble cry it is. It is heard in the cabinet and in the senate — in the pulpit and on the platform — in the crowded city and in the sequestered village. The press, in every department, and by every means, is keeping up the subject, and filling the land with the echoes of that mighty word, “Education! Education!” Christians should be the last to let the sound die away; they must be foremost in pouring light and life over the dark masses of our ignorant population, and let it be seen that their religion hates darkness. Every church must have its day school, and be considered behind its age, and lamentably defective in its apparatus of instruction and reformation, if there be no portion of the popu-

lation. under its general and moral training. Let a congregation neglecting this be looked at with wonder and reproach, as if it knew not the signs of the times, or heard not the call of God and its country to supplant the crimes and curses of ignorance and vice, by the virtues and the blessings of a sound education. In the glorious rivalry that is stirred up among all denominations for the education of the people, let each and every church consider itself deficient in earnestness if it has no share in the honor of a nation's education. The people *must* be educated — *ought* to be educated — *will* be educated, and let us all contend who shall best and most effectually do the work.

Again, I observe, every working church will also have its RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY, and thus call in the aid of the press to counteract the mischief which the press, by another kind of publications, already mentioned in a previous chapter, is continually doing. This is a means of doing good which requires so small a capital, either for setting it up, or keeping it up, that no community of Christians, however small or however poor, can make or find an excuse for neglecting it. If only a pound a year could be raised, it would enable a few warm hearted Christians to do much spiritual good: with even the limited amount of small arms, these spiritual guerilla parties might do some execution in the holy war. It is painful to think how much this cheap and easy method of doing good is neglected, and even where it is not altogether neglected, how much it is left in the hands of those who, as regards some of them, are least fit for it. Where are our men of influence, and our females of standing in society, and what are *they* about? Is it a work beneath *their* dignity, to carry the message of salvation into the cottages of the poor, and to scatter amidst the abodes of ignorance, vice, and misery, those leaves of the tree of life which are for the healing of the nations? Would it degrade *them* to go and read such a narrative, for instance, as that of "Poor Joseph," in the dark and dreary habitation, where inmates as ignorant and as simple as he might be found, and who, like him,

might be induced, and by God's Spirit enabled, to credit the "faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners?" Shall the sons and daughters of wealth leave the hymn of the widow's joyful heart, and the blessing of him that was ready to perish, to be the portion and bliss of the poor only? Why, O why do not all who have no family claims upon their attention, go forth, on a Sabbath afternoon, with these messengers of mercy, into the scenes of ignorance, vice and misery, which are in the vicinity of their own dwellings, and thus encounter the prince of darkness in his own battlefield, and fight him with weapons in size and shape like those with which he is slaying the souls of men?

In addition to this, how many could, in our warfare, like artillery-men, manage what might be called the great guns of Scripture, as Readers of the Word of God! Suppose every church had a *Scripture-Reading Society*, formed of young or older men, or both, who would sally forth with the Bible, and obtain houses where they might be permitted to sit down, and read to the family alone, or to others also that might be gathered in for the purpose. We ask not, in this case, for *preachers*, but simply for *readers*; an office for which nothing is wanted but a capacity to enunciate in an articulate and distinct manner "the true sayings of God." This is a means of usefulness which almost every one could command; and it is no feeble one either. God's word is as fire, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. A single passage lighting on the judgment, heart, and conscience, might be the power of God unto the salvation of the soul. Let us have faith in our Bibles, and believe that they are instruments adapted for their end. We must raise the Bible in public estimation: and what could more effectually do this than to go and read it to the people? How would it impress them with the value and importance of this precious volume, if they saw gentlemen and ladies ever coming to their habitations for the express purpose of reading to them its contents! The plan of hired persons, who shall devote their whole time to this work, is an admirable scheme, now much in vogue both in Ireland

and also among the evangelical clergy in this country,* and will be productive, no doubt, of much good. But in one respect the unhired and unpaid services of persons who would give themselves to this labor, would be likely to produce a still deeper impression upon the minds of the laboring population, than stipendiary agents. . Here would be no suspicion of sectarianism, no supposition that it was undertaken by the agents as a means of livelihood, but there would be a deep conviction of the generosity and kindness which could undertake such a labor, with no other fee or reward but that which is bestowed by the testimony of conscience, the approbation of God, and the gratitude of the objects. How is it so simple and so admirable a plan has not been more generally adopted? Just because it has not been brought forward into notice by those whose duty it is to suggest plans, means, and motives to the people for doing good, I mean their spiritual guides and instructors. Why might not every pastor have a band of these Scripture readers under his training selecting for them week by week the portions which they might read to the people, and illustrating these portions by such remarks as the readers might understand, remember, and repeat to those whom they visit?

* **THIRDLY.** There are duties which the churches owe to the country at large in the way of its more perfect evangelization. All the remarks on religious patriotism made in a former chapter on individual effort for the conversion of souls, apply with equal force here. I cannot, nor is it necessary I should, enter into a minute specification of all the various societies so happily multiplied in this active age, to meet the various objects of Christian

* Among the latter this scheme is become, and very deservedly, a great favorite. The Rev. J. C. Miller, the rector of St. Martin's, in Birmingham, has lately addressed to his parishioners a heart-stirring appeal, entitled "A FEW ANXIOUS WORDS," to excite their zeal and liberality in supporting this plan, by raising for him a fund to employ four readers in his parish; and I believe that from the high and deserved esteem in which he is held, this indefatigable Christian pastor will be supplied with all he asks for.

compassion and religious zeal ; such as the British Missions for England, Ireland, and the Colonies, the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, the Seaman's Friend Society, the Religious Tract Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Although I would not abstract either time, attention, or money, from our foreign missions, and our labors for the conversion of the heathen, yet I *would* have more of all these given to home. To talk of abandoning the whole heathen and Mahomedan world till this country is perfectly evangelized, is preposterous, and is usually the slang of those who do very little for either ; as it will be found by an appeal to facts, that those who are most zealous in sending the gospel abroad, are the very men who are most active in spreading it at home. Still, it must be admitted that our own country has been too much neglected. Our own population are in a deplorable condition as to morals, and religion, and education also ; and it would be Quixotic, indeed, to seek the conversion of Chinese, Hottentots, and Polynesians, while our own neighbors were left to perish. To leave our homestead in an ill condition, and attend only to the extremities of the farm, is certainly not good husbandry. This is starting from the end, instead of the beginning. The order of benevolence is from particulars to generals, and from what is proximate to what is remote ; and this rule should be observed in part, though not rigidly, in the present case. In addition to the claims which our country gives us as ours, and as more under our influence than foreign lands, we should recollect that all we do for home is, in an indirect manner, something done for other lands. By spreading religion here, we are raising friends and funds for foreign missions. Our churches and schools, as fast as they are formed, are pressed in as auxiliaries to the missionary societies. No church, therefore, can understand its duties, or be exerting the proper influence which belongs to it, that is not zealous in supporting all institutions that have the more perfect evangelization of our own country for their object. China, India, and all other heathen countries, must be, so to speak, converted in-

Britain, by multiplying here the instruments and means for converting them abroad.

FOURTHLY. There are also the operations to be carried on for the conversion of the world, in support of our vast missionary schemes. This ought to be considered as *the* vocation of the church, the full and final development of her energies, and that for which she ought to prepare herself by all her other engagements. I know not that I could give a more beautiful exemplification of the spirit which ought to pervade our churches on this subject, than that which occurs in the life of Baxter. Towards the close of his holy and useful life, he set himself to review his history, to compare his then present with his former self, and to record the changes which time, reflection, observation, and experience had made in his views, feelings, and conduct. Among many other most instructive things we find the following : —

“ My soul is much more afflicted with the thoughts of the miserable world, and more drawn out in desire for their conversion, than heretofore. I was wont to look but little further than England in my prayers, as not considering the state of the rest of the world ; or if I prayed for the conversion of the Jews, that was almost all. But now, as I better understand the case of the world, and the method of our Lord’s prayer, so there is nothing in the world that lieth so heavy upon my heart, as the thought of the miserable nations of the earth. It is the most astonishing part of all God’s providence to me, that he so far forsaketh almost all the world, and confineth his special favors to so few ; that so small a part of the world hath the profession of Christianity, in comparison with heathens, Mohammedans, and other infidels ! And that among professing Christians there are so few that are saved from gross delusions, and have but any competent knowledge ; and that so few are seriously religious, and truly set their hearts on heaven. I cannot be affected so much with the calamities of my own relations, or the land of my nativity, as with the case of the Heathen, Mohammedan, and ignorant nations of the earth. No part of my prayer is so deeply serious, as that for the conver-

sion of the infidel and ungodly world, that God's name may be sanctified, and his kingdom come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven; nor was I ever so sensible before, what a plague the division of languages is, which hindereth our speaking to them for their conversion; nor what a great sin tyranny is, which keepeth out the gospel from most of the nations of the world. Could we but go among Tartarians, Turks, and heathens, and speak their language, I should be but little troubled for the silencing of eighteen hundred ministers at once, in England, nor for all the rest that were cast out here, and in Scotland, and in Ireland; there being no employment in the world so desirable, in my eyes, as to labor for the winning of such miserable souls; which maketh me greatly honor Mr. John Eliot, the apostle of the Indians in New England, and whoever else have labored in such a work."

Such were the holy effusions poured forth in his solitude by this holy and eminent man, when looking at things in the light of an opening heaven and a coming eternity, a situation so favorable to the clear and vivid perception of divine truth. I know not where to look, among all modern missionary sermons or speeches, for anything more eloquent, more touching, or more instructive than this. Baxter lived in an age when no missionary societies existed, and when he could only lament the condition of the heathen world, and pray for their conversion; and oh, how intense were his feelings, how fervent his prayers! Could he have prophetically anticipated the scenes of our May meetings, in what rapturous strains would he have congratulated the blessed generation who were honored to bear a part in such transactions; and yet, of that generation, with all their activity, how few are there whose zeal can compare with his for purity or ardor! Which of us, in our most devoted seasons, can emulate the deep emotion of these affecting paragraphs? Baxter was now silenced from his beloved work of preaching the gospel, by that rancorous and relentless spirit of persecution which had arraigned, condemned, and imprisoned him as a culprit; and yet to

hear *him* say, in *such* circumstances, that he was not so affected by his own sufferings, or the sufferings of his relatives, and his country, as by the condition of the heathen ! To hear *him* say that he should not regret the silencing of two thousand witnesses for God in these realms, if they could but go and bear their testimony in foreign lands ! To hear *him* mourning over tyranny, not because it robbed him of his rights and immured him in a jail, but because it shut out the gospel from perishing souls ! Oh where shall we find anything like this in all the most heroic and self-denying instances of missionary zeal in the day or the country in which we live ! Friends of missions, see here a pattern, at once to instruct, reprove, and stimulate you. Here is *individual* zeal — no waiting for others ; *closet* zeal — no mere platform stimulus ; *prayerful* zeal — no self-sufficient activity ; *serious* zeal — no levity, no frivolity, no laughter-loving interest ; *self-denying* zeal, manifested in a willingness to surrender the dearest rights of humanity, so that the gospel could be preached to the heathen — no putting off the cause with the mere parings of his comforts ; and all this founded upon an *intelligent* and considerate acquaintance with the condition of its object. Then, when such a zeal as this pervades our churches — when each Christian apart, and each family apart, shall take up the subject on such ground, and with such solicitude as this — when the missionary fire is thus kept burning upon the altar of our hearts, fed by meditation and fanned by prayer — when *our* trials press not so heavily upon us as the miseries of the heathen — when liberty seems chiefly precious because it gives us an opportunity to preach the gospel to the heathen — and when even literature is valuable most of all because it aids us in translating and preaching the Word of God — then when the great misery is an unconverted world, and the great desideratum is a converted one — then will the Spirit be poured out from on high, and the world, in answer to the prayers of the church, be converted to Christ.

The present organization of the missionary societies is the best, perhaps, the circumstances of our times

allow, and deserves the support of all the friends of the Redeemer and his cause, till God shall show unto us "a more excellent way." That he will do so, I have little doubt. We are only in the childhood of our missionary growth, and shall lay aside, when we have reached our manhood, much that we are now doing, as the childish things of our early years. More of God, and less of man, will appear. The churches of Christ will then, probably, themselves be the missionary societies of the day, instead of one vast, and to a certain extent unwieldy organization, embracing a whole denomination. Missionaries will go out as members, representatives, and messengers of these bodies of Christians at home; and much of the machinery of our present social arrangements will be laid aside as cumbersome and artificial, for a mode of operation characterized by the simplicity of primitive times. This, however, must be left for Divine Providence to accomplish, who will, no doubt, verify in this instance, as well as in every other, the truth of that sublime declaration, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

What the churches have now to do, is to go on with increased zeal, liberality, and prayer, in the great work of sustaining their respective societies, which are laboring, and not without the token of God's blessing, for the conversion of the world.

I may devote a few remarks here on two points as strictly appropriate to the subject of this chapter — female agency and public collections.

With regard to the first of these I confess that while I do not wish to dispense with it altogether, for this is not possible, and if it were, would not be right, I feel jealous lest it should in any measure impair that retiringness of manner, that unaffected reserve, that modesty of demeanor, and that delight in home, which are woman's chief loveliness, and the fascination of her charms. Should the modern practice of employing females so extensively

in our religious institutions, make them bold, obtrusive, and fond of publicity, it would be corrupting society at its source, by spoiling them for wives and mothers, however it might fit them to be the instruments of benevolent organizations. Whatever impairs the beauty, or diminishes the strength, of the home virtues, though it may aid the operations of public institutions, is radically mischievous, and cannot be compensated by any benefit which could be procured, of any kind, or for any object. It is always revolting to my sense of propriety to see a young girl of sixteen or eighteen, pacing a street, knocking at door after door, entering shops, offices, and counting-houses, and addressing herself in the character of a beggar, to any one, and to every one, not excepting young men. Such things are not unknown, perhaps not uncommon. Ministers should be very careful how they employ young females, and take especial care, when it cannot be avoided, to exert all their influence to repress a spirit of levity and folly, and the least approach to impropriety; and diffuse an air of seriousness and gravity over all that is done in this way, and by such agents. Judicious mothers will be much upon the alert in exercising a salutary vigilance over their daughters, and resist every attempt to engage them in services which may have the least tendency to despoil them of their modesty, simplicity, and love of home.

The following appropriate remarks are from an article in the Quarterly Review, on "The Life of Mrs. Fry." "The high and holy duties assigned to woman by the decrees of Providence are essentially of a secret and retiring nature: it is in the privacy of the closet that the soft, yet sterling wisdom of the Christian mother stamps those impressions on the youthful heart, which, though often defaced, are seldom wholly obliterated. Whatever tends to draw her from these sacred offices, or even abate their full force and efficacy, is high treason against the hopes of a nation. We do not deny that valuable services may be safely, and are safely, rendered by many intelligent and pious ladies, who devote their hours of leisure and recreation to the Raratongas and Tahitis of

British Christendom — it is not to such we would make allusion ; our thoughts are directed to that total absorption which, plunging women into the vortex of eccentric and self-imposed obligations, merges the private in the public duty, confounds what is principal with that which is secondary, and withdraws them from labors which they alone can accomplish, to those in which they can at least be equalled by others.”

Considerable care should also be taken, when it is thought proper to employ the agency of children in collecting money by cards or otherwise, that no injury be done to their young minds in destroying that humility, simplicity, and artlessness, which are the ornament of childhood, and fostering a spirit of vanity, and a habit of obtrusive forwardness in their manners. It is a doubt with some persons whether this practice should be countenanced at all.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS are a subject of immense importance : much that is going on in the world for its conversion to God, depends upon them ; and the life, activity, and earnestness of a church, must be estimated in some measure by the readiness and liberality with which they are made. This plan is an easy and expeditious method of raising money, and is perfectly consonant with all the principles of the New Testament. These collections have become of so much consequence, that it seems almost necessary to systematize them. Some attempt and approach to this has been made by the plan among the Congregational churches to collect on the last Sabbath in October, for the British missions ; but a far more perfect scheme is adopted, under the power of Conference, among the Wesleyans, by which I believe certain prescribed objects are collected for on certain days throughout the whole denomination. We, as Congregationalists, and indeed other bodies of Christians, have no such authority as this ; the independence of our system of polity does not allow it. In Ireland, collections are made after every sermon, it being understood that copper only is expected ordinarily, and silver at stated and well-known times. In Scotland, opportunity is given to the

worshippers as they go into the sanctuary, to deposit their offerings every Sabbath in plates held to receive them at the door.

The greater part of the denominations in this country, both established and unestablished, have no system whatever, beyond an arrangement, which some congregations make at the beginning of the year, concerning the objects they will collect for during the ensuing twelve months; and the standing rule as to time with some of them is to have a collection for some object every month. My own opinion is that, generally speaking, we have too few collections, an idea which perhaps will be startling to some, who think we have already too many. A "collection" is a very vague term; it may mean an *effort* to raise a large sum, or it may mean only the gathering up of the smaller offerings of the people; and attaching to it only the former idea, our congregations may well shrink from the multiplication of these *efforts*; but suppose a collection implied, as it does, except on occasions, in Ireland and Scotland, only the giving of a six-pence, or a penny — such collections might be multiplied indefinitely, without oppressing any one; for who would be impoverished by a six-pence, or a penny, even every week? Suppose, then, we had a graduated scale of collections. The first class actually requiring an effort, for the Missionary Society, for instance, or for any other paramount object, when everybody would be expected to give their largest sums; the second class requiring only half this effort, for British Missions, or anything else the congregation might determine upon; the third class requiring no effort at all, but merely the smaller sums. Now it is the multiplication of this third class that I allude to, which would oppress no one, and yet, if generally made, would, for various objects that now receive very inadequate help, raise a large sum. What an amount would be raised by a six-pence, or only a single penny, being asked for from the individuals composing our whole denomination! And if it were announced, when the object is mentioned, that it came under the first, second,

or third class collection, the people would then know what was expected from them in the way of contribution.

This scheme will be thought by some to be liable to objection; first, as being fanciful; but if it be effective we need not mind that. Secondly, it would often lead us into difficulty under what class to place an object; but there is already such a classification, though not so systematically arranged and designated; for who gives as much to the Seaman's Friend Society, or to the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, or to the Moravian Missions, or to many other objects that could be mentioned, as they do to the London Missionary Society, or to British Missions? The objects classify themselves. But it will be said this will restrict benevolence. By no means, for no one need be tied down to the six-pence or penny; if they *choose* to give more, it is perfectly at their option to do so, but they are not asked for more. And then as to giving dissatisfaction to the societies which would only get into the third class, many of them would gladly get there, rather than not get into any one. Let them have only the smaller gatherings from *all* the churches, throughout the country, and they would account themselves much better supported than they are at present. But the multiplication of collections, it may be said, would spoil the ministrations of the sanctuary, and make us weary of hearing about societies. So it would if there was to be a long statement made about each; but not if a simple announcement was made, and very little said about the matter, leaving the thing to commend itself to every man's judgment, for no one would want a long appeal which was to get only so small a sum from him.

This plan would suit small congregations as well as large ones, which are apt to excuse themselves from doing anything, because they cannot do much. It is a plea often used by a congregation that the little they can raise is not worth sending; but if they would consider how a multiplication of these small sums makes a large one, they would see that they ought not to be deterred by the consideration of their paucity and poverty. Such

a plan as I now recommend would save the trouble, expense and inconvenience of deputations, at least to a considerable extent. Not that I think these can be entirely dispensed with, though it is high time they were reduced within a much narrower compass than they occupy at present. They are a waste of public money, a disparagement to resident ministers, a hindrance to the duties of the pastorate, a pandering to a vicious appetite for novelty and excitement, and a means of rendering churches dissatisfied with their own pastors, by their being thus brought into comparison, not to say contrast, with the strangers who visit them.

The whole system of modern evangelization partakes far too much of the noisy, the showy, the ostentatious and vain-glorious. We are not content to work, but we must talk so much about what we do; there must be such endless speechifying, such blowing of trumpets, such parade of names and sums and operations, that it looks as if it were not the doing of the thing upon which we were intent, but telling what we have done, and priding ourselves upon it. And why is all this, but because our passions rather than our principles are at present engaged in the work; because our tastes rather than our convictions are employed; because motives have less to do with these matters than impulses. We want a deeper sort of piety in our churches, a more realizing sense of the claims of Christ, the value of the soul, the misery of men without the gospel, and the great ends and obligations of the Christian profession. If the love of Christ constrained us—if no man lived to himself—if we felt that for every farthing of property we were accountable to God, and were habitually looking on to the day of account, we should not want such instrumentality as is now employed; or at any rate should want much less of it.

But we now return to the idea that an earnest church is a WORKING CHURCH. Churches as well as individuals have their character; and an honorable one it is for either, to be known as always busy in doing good. There are four descriptions of religious communities to

be found, as regards their prevailing character. The first consists of those in which an apparent, and perhaps it may be but an apparent, high degree of spirituality exists—the preacher is devout, and his sermons partake of his own habitude of thought and feeling, and the people, like the pastor, are thought to be, and perhaps are, professors of a higher tone of piety than many others—there is much of the divine life, in one of its phases, there—but although numerous, and wealthy, they do nothing, or nothing in proportion to their ability, for the cause of Christ. Their collections are few and small; they are not at all known as engaged in any of the great societies of the day. Their calling seems to be to luxuriate on gospel privileges, to enjoy a perpetual feast of fat things; but they appear to think they have no vocation to sound out the word of the Lord; or, at any rate, they consider themselves as something like the Jewish church, a stationary witness for God.

The second description of our churches is that of the communities of Christians where there is perhaps less of spirituality, less of the unction and the odor of doctrinal theology, either in the pastor or the flock, though the spiritual life is by no means low in comparison with many others; but then all is activity and energy—the pastor is devoted not merely to his people but to the cause of God at large. The collections are numerous and great. The church can be depended upon, and is looked to for assistance by the directors of our institutions. All hands are busy in Sunday and daily schools—tract distribution—working parties—Bible classes—and organizations for home and foreign societies—all that know them think and speak of them as a thoroughly working church.

The third description applies to those who are neither the one nor the other of these; they have lost their spirituality, and have not gained a character for activity—they neither enjoy the life of godliness nor diffuse it—they have not even a name to live, but are dead.

The fourth includes those—alas! how few they are—who unite an earnest spirituality with an activity and

liberality no less eminent; where the spiritual life is all healthfulness and vigor, and where its developments are seen in all the operations of a holy zeal. This, then, is what we want; churches in which the vital principle of piety shall be so strong that they may be said to be like the mystic wheels of Ezekiel, instinct with the Spirit of God and ever in motion — churches whose activity, like that of the strong and healthy man, is the working of a life too vivacious to remain in a state of indolence and repose — churches so filled with the Spirit, that his gracious influence is perpetually welling up and flowing over in streams of benevolent activity for the salvation of the world — churches partaking of so much of the mind of Christ that from their own internal constraint, they must, like him, be ever going about doing good. Oh that God would pour out his Spirit, and raise every separate fellowship of believers to this blessed state of spiritual prosperity!

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAUSES THAT OPERATE TO REPRESS THIS EARNESTNESS OF RELIGION.

SUCH a state of the church as that to which this volume refers, cannot be rationally looked for without intense solicitude, importunate and incessant prayer, resolute effort, and both a vigorous and watchful opposition to hostile influence. This malign influence is exerted in various ways, and from various quarters. Of course the chief hindrance is from the remains of corruption in the heart of every Christian, and the efforts of Satan; and these must be overcome by a more determined and severe mortification of our members which are upon the earth, and a more unrelenting crucifixion of the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof; as well as by sobriety and vigilance of mind in resisting the temptations of our adversary the devil. But now I refer more especially to certain impediments arising out of the state both of the church and of the world.

1. Perhaps we may consider the easy access to church fellowship which is now so generally granted, as one cause of the deterioration of the piety of this day. I am aware that the admission of members to our churches is a subject of perplexing difficulty; it is not at our option to make the door of ingress to the church, and of approach to the table of the Lord, either wider or narrower than it is made by him to whom both the spiritual house and the table for the inmates belong. But the difficulty lies in knowing exactly what is his will on the subject, in each particular case as it occurs. For my own part, it is a heavy burden to determine upon the point; no part of my duty is so perplexing. I am afraid, on the one hand, to repel the true convert, and deprive him of the means of nourishment and growth; and, on the other, of admitting the self-deceived, and being thus the abettor of his delusion and destruction. Two consequences result from the reception of unsuitable persons to communion; they not only are confirmed themselves in their false views of their own case, but by their low state of pious feeling, or total destitution of it, their worldly-mindedness and laxity, they corrupt others, and exert a deadening influence upon the whole community. Their example is a source of corruption to very many, who are allured by it into all their secularities and fashionable follies. One family of such worldly and lukewarm professors is often a grief to the pastor, a lamentation to the spiritual part of the flock, a snare to many of the less pious, and a reproach to the church at large. Too many of this description find their way, in these days of easy profession, into all our churches. I have arrived, therefore, at the conclusion, that our tendency in this day is to make the standard for admission too low, and the test of spiritual fitness too easy. The consequence of this is that our churches have many in them who are professors only, and who exert an unfavorable influence over those of whom we hope better things. They benumb by their torpid touch those with whom they come into contact. It is probable that there is no pastor who, upon looking

round upon his church, does not see many members, who, if they had manifested no more concern when they made application for membership than they now do, he would have never thought of receiving them into communion, while they indeed would never have applied for it themselves. How much is it to be wished that such persons, if they do not improve, would dissolve their connection with the church, since their remaining only corrupts it, without doing anything for themselves, but to harden their hearts, aggravate their guilt, and increase their condemnation.

II. There are few things which exert a more unfavorable influence upon the piety of our churches than the mixed marriages between those who are professors of religion, and those who are not; and which, it must be acknowledged and regretted, are in the present day lamentably common. The operation of such unions on the state of religion, so far as regards the parties themselves, need be no mystery to any one. When two individuals of different tastes, in reference to any matter, are associated, and one of them has an aversion, or even an indifference, to the pursuit of the other, it is next to impossible for the one so opposed to sustain with vigor and perseverance his selected course of action; and then if he cannot assimilate the taste of the other party to his own, he must, for the sake of harmony, give up his cherished predilections. This applies to no subject with such force as it does to religion. Every Christian man carries in his own heart, and encounters from surrounding circumstances, sufficient resistance to a life of godliness, without selecting a still more potent foe to piety in an unconverted wife. Conceive of either party, in such an unsanctified union, continually exposed, if not to the actual opposition, yet to the deadening influence, of the other. Think of a religious wife, to put it in the mildest form, not persecuted indeed, though this is often the case, by an irreligious husband, but left without the aid of his example, his prayer, his coöperation; hindered from a regular attendance upon many of the means of grace which she deems necessary for keeping up the life of godliness in her soul; obliged to be much in a sort

of company for which she may have no taste, yea, a positive aversion, and to engage in occupations which she finds it difficult to reconcile to her conscience, or harmonize with her profession; hearing no conversation, and witnessing no pursuits, but what are of the earth, earthly; ridiculed, perhaps, for some of her conscientious scruples, and doomed to hear perpetual sneers cast upon professors for their inconsistency; or, what is still more ensnaring, constantly exposed to the deleterious influence of an unvarying, but, at the same time, unsanctified, amiableness of disposition in her husband, whose want of piety seems compensated by many other excellences—is it likely, unless there be a martyr-like piety, that amidst such trials she will continue firm, consistent, and spiritual? Will she not, if possessed only of the average degree of piety, relax by little and little, till her enfeebled and pliable profession easily accommodates itself to the wishes and tastes of her unconverted husband?

But perhaps the influence on religion generally is still worse when the husband is a professor, and the wife is not; worse because he is more seen and known; has more to do with church affairs; has greater power over others, and therefore may be supposed to be more injurious or beneficial, accordingly as his personal piety is more or less vigorous and consistent. When such a man unites himself with a female whose tastes and habits are opposed to spiritual religion; who is fond of gay company and fashionable amusements, and would prefer a party or a rout to a religious service; who feels restless, uneasy, and discontented in religious society and occupations; who has no love for family devotion, and is often absent from the morning or evening sacrifice—is it likely the husband of such a woman will long retain his consistency, his fervor, his spirituality? Will he not, for the sake of connubial happiness, concede one thing after another, till nearly all the more strict forms of godliness are surrendered, and much of its spirit lost. His house becomes the scene of gayety, his children grow up under maternal influence, his own piety evaporates, and at last he has little left of religion, but the name.

And now what is his influence likely to be upon others? What families usually spring from such marriages; and what churches are, by a still wider spread of mischief, formed by them. This practice is ever going on before our eyes, and we feel unable to arrest it. It was never more common than at this time. Notwithstanding the protests which have been lifted up against it,* the evil is continually spreading, and while it too convincingly proves the low state of religion amongst us, is an evidence of the truth of the last particular, that our present practice of the admission of persons to membership is far too lax. Too few of the female members of our churches would refuse an advantageous offer of marriage on the ground of the want of religion in the individual who makes the proposal. And how many of the opposite sex would allow their conscience, on the same ground, to control their fancy, and give law to their passions? Can we wonder that there should be little intense devotion in our churches, in such a state of things as this? How can we look for earnest piety when such hindrances as these are thrown in the way of it? Honorable and noble exceptions, I admit there are. Among others, one especially have I known, where a female, by consenting to marry an ungodly man, could have been raised with her fatherless children, from widowhood, solicitude, suspense, and comparative poverty, to wealth, ease, and grandeur; but where, with martyr-like consistency, she chose rather to struggle on for the support of herself and her children, with the smile of conscience and of God to sustain her noble heart, than to accept the golden bait under the frown of both. But how few are there who would thus account the reproach of Christ greater treasure than all the riches of Egypt!

It is difficult to know what to do with this evil. Some churches make it a matter of discipline, and expel the member who marries an individual that is not a professor. This is the well-known practice of the Quaker body; and also of some of the churches of the Congre-

* By none, I believe more frequently than myself, for I have adverted to it, or dwelt at length upon it, in several of my works.

gational order. There are objections, however, against this, which I have never yet been able to surmount. A member, whether suspended or excommunicated, can never be restored except upon a profession of penitence. Now, though in this case there can be no reformation, since the married cannot re-marry, there may be repentance; yet it is a delicate affair, as affecting his wife, to bring a man to say he is sorry he ever married; unless, indeed, we separate, by a refined abstraction, the act of marrying an ungodly person, from his act of marrying this particular woman. Instances may occur, and have occurred in my own pastorate, of so very flagrant a nature, indicating so total a want of all sense of religious truth, feeling, and propriety, as to warrant, and indeed require, a church to excise the party who had thus violated every rule of Scripture and of common decorum. In all cases of this description the pastor is called upon to interfere before the connection is fixed, if he have an opportunity. He should point out the inconsistency in the church-member, the peril that must inevitably ensue to the soul, and the all but uniform and considerable unhappiness that attends such marriages; and in the case of such flagrant impropriety as I have last mentioned, let him candidly state the probability of exclusion from the church.

III. I may mention, as the next hindrance to earnest piety, the taste for amusement by which the present day is, perhaps, characterized more than most which have preceded it. Every age has had its sources of pleasure, and its means and methods of diversion, to relieve the mind from the fatigue and oppression of the more serious occupations of life. The human mind cannot be kept always upon the stretch, nor can the heart sustain, without occasional relief, its burden of care; and we would not rob the soul of its few brief holidays, nor condemn as irrational or unchristian its occasional oblivion of worldly vexations amidst the beauties of nature, or the pleasures of the social circle.* There is a time to laugh as well

* Two or three of the particulars of this chapter have been touched upon in the volume upon "An Earnest Ministry;" but as they still more intimately relate to the congregation, they are reintroduced here.

as to weep. It is highly probable that, with the advance of civilization, and of the arts and sciences, man, instead of rendering himself independent of the lighter amusements, will actually multiply them. And it must be admitted that modern taste has, by its elegance, supplanted some of the gross carnality and vulgar joviality of former days. There is an obvious reformation and elevation of popular amusements. The low taste for brutal sports is we hope supplanted by a higher kind of enjoyment, which, if not more Christian, is at any rate more human and rational, and this is something gained to morals, even where the improvement does not go on to religion. Still, it may be seriously questioned whether, among professing Christians, the propensity for entertainments has not been growing too fast, and ripened into something like a passion for worldly pleasures. Dinner parties, among the wealthier classes of professors, have become frequent and expensive; viands the most costly, and wines the most various, are set forth with a profusion which prove at what an outlay the entertainment has been served up to gratify the vanity of the host, and the palate of his guests. There is an interesting incident in point, mentioned in the life of Mr. Scott, the commentator, which I shall here introduce, as showing the light in which that eminent man viewed this subject. I am not quite sure I have not introduced it in one of my other works; if I have, it will bear repetition.

“For some time I had frequent invitations to meet dinner parties formed of persons professing religion, and I generally accepted them; yet seldom returned home without dissatisfaction, and even remorse of conscience. One day (the Queen’s birth day) I met at the house of a rather opulent tradesman, a large party, among whom were some other ministers. The dinner was exceedingly splendid and luxurious, consisting of twenty courses, including every delicacy in season. Some jokes passed upon the subject; and one person in particular, a minister of much celebrity, said, ‘If we proceed thus, we shall soon have the gout numbered among the privileges of the gospel.’ This passed off very well; but in the evening, a question being proposed on the principal dangers to which

evangelical religion is exposed in the present day, when it came my turn to speak, I ventured to say that *conformity to the world* among persons professing godliness was the great danger of all. One thing led to another, and the luxurious dinner did not pass unnoticed by me. I expressed myself as cautiously as I could consistently with my conscience, but I observed that however needful it might be for Christians in superior stations to give splendid and expensive dinners to their worldly relations and connections, yet when ministers and Christians met together, as such, it was not consistent, but should be exchanged for more frugal entertainments of each other, and more abundant feeding of *the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind*. Luke xiv. 12-14. Probably I was too pointed; and many strong expressions of disapprobation were used at the time; but I went home as one who had thrown off a great burden from his back — *rejoicing in the testimony of my conscience*. The consequence was, a sort of tacit excommunication from the circle. The gentleman at whose house this passed never invited me again but once, and then our dinner was literally a piece of boiled beef. He was, however, a truly pious man, though misled by bad examples and customs. He always continued to act towards me in a friendly manner, and though I had not seen him for several years, he left me a small legacy at his death." There are few who will not be of opinion that Mr. Scott's rebuke would have been conveyed with more propriety, had it been administered privately; when it would manifest all the fidelity, without any of the seeming rudeness, with which it was given. Yet how convincingly does it prove the clearness of his perception of what is right, the tenderness of his conscience in shrinking from what is wrong, and the strength of his moral courage in reproofing what he deemed to be a fault. What would Scott have said of a professor of religion exhibiting two-and-thirty different sorts of wine upon his table and sideboard at the same time! *

* When will the ministers and members of our churches begin generally to inquire, whether it is not expedient for them, if not for their own sakes, yet for the sake of the community

But it is not the dinner party so much as the *evening rout*, that is becoming the prevailing custom and the snare of modern Christians, when large assemblages are convened, comprising pious and worldly, grave and gay young and old, not to enjoy "the feast of reason, and the flow of soul;" not perhaps even to be regaled by the pleasures of music, but by the amusement of the song and the dance; when large expense is incurred, late hours are kept, and everything but a spirit friendly to

to discontinue altogether the use of intoxicating liquors? When it is considered that one half of the insanity, two thirds of the abject poverty, and three fourths of the crime, of our country, are to be traced up to drunkenness, — that more than £60,000,000 are annually expended in destructive beverages, — that myriads annually die the drunkard's death, and descend still lower than the drunkard's grave — that thousands of church members are every year cut off from Christian fellowship for inebriety — that every minister of the gospel has to complain of the hindrance to his usefulness from this cause — and that more ministers are disgraced by this than by any other habit — that in short more misery and more crime flow over society from this source than from any other, war and slavery not excepted — and that by the highest medical authorities these intoxicating drinks are reduced as diet, from the rank of necessaries to luxuries — it surely does become every professor of religion to ask whether it is not incumbent upon him, both for his own safety and for the good of his fellow-creatures, to abstain from this pernicious indulgence. On the authority of Mr. Sheriff Alison, it is stated that in the year 1840, there were in Glasgow amongst about 30,000 inhabited houses, no fewer than 3010 appropriated to the sale of intoxicating drinks. The same gentleman declared that the consumption of ardent spirits in that city amounted to 1,800,000 gallons yearly, the value of which is £1,350,000. No fewer than 30,000 persons there, go to bed drunk every Saturday night; 25,000 commitments are annually made on account of drunkenness, of which 10,000 are females. Is Glasgow worse than many other places? Professors of religion, ponder this; and will you not, by abstaining from a luxury, lend the aid of your example to discountenance this monster crime, and monster misery? It is in the power, and therefore is it not the duty, of the Christian church to do much to stop this evil, which sends more persons to the mad-house, the jail, the hulks and the gallows — more bodies to the grave — and more souls to perdition, than any other that can be mentioned. Can the church be in earnest till it is prepared to make this sacrifice?

religion is promoted. It is this kind of social amusement — the fashionable, full-dress, evening party — carried to the extent of entire conformity to the world, and frequently resorted to — that is injurious to the interests of vital godliness in our Christian churches. But even where there is not this extreme of gayety, and a somewhat more sober aspect is thrown over the circle, yet when the winter passes off in a round of evening assemblages for no higher occupations than music and singing, it is an occupation scarcely congenial with the religious taste, or friendly to the promotion of religious improvement. I have known young people, professors of religion too, who have related with gleeful boasting, as if this were the element in which they delighted to live, the number of evenings during one winter they have passed in company, and in such occupations as have been just alluded to.

Now it may be, and it is, extremely difficult, and no one would attempt to solve the problem — to determine what kind of parties, and what number of them, are compatible with true godliness, so that when the rule for this kind, and this number of entertainments, is transgressed, the religion of the individual is questionable or must be injured. We can only lay down general principles, leaving the application of them to individual judgment. There are, no doubt, persons of such strength of real in-rooted piety, of such strong devotional taste, and such fixed habits of godliness, that they could pass unhurt through a constant round of seemingly dissipating amusements; just as there are persons of such strong constitutions and such robust health, that they can breathe a tainted atmosphere, or even take some kinds of poison without injury. There is a most striking instance of this lately published by the Bishop of Oxford, in the Life of Lady Godolphin, who preserved not only her personal purity, but an unusual degree of spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, amidst the endless gayeties and the revolting licentiousness of the court of Charles the Second. In reference to which, we can only say, "To the pure, all things are pure." But most certainly the

average piety of our day is not of such robustness as to be able to resist strong contagion. The very craving after diversion, which there is in some persons, shows a morbid state of the soul. It might be supposed, judging from the representations of true religion which we find in the Word of God, and from the general principles contained in them, as well as from the recorded experience of the saints, which is to be found in religious biography, that a Christian, one who is really such, has been rendered independent of all such sources of enjoyment as those to which the people of the world resort. It might have been concluded, that in the peace that passeth understanding, the joy unspeakable and full of glory, and the rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, he had found not only a substitute for the gratifications which by becoming a Christian he had surrendered, but an infinite compensation, and that he would deem it a disparagement of his religious privileges to suppose that anything more than these were necessary for his felicity, or that if an addition *were* needed, an adequate one could not be found in healthful recreation amidst the scenery of nature, in the pleasures of knowledge, or the activities of benevolence. To hear all this talk, then, about the necessity of entertainment, and the impossibility of relieving the urgency of labor, and the monotony of life, without parties, routs, and diversions, sounds very like a growing weariness of the yoke of Christ, or a complaining, as if the church's paradise were no better than a waste, howling wilderness, which needed the embellishments of worldly taste, and all the resources of human art, to render it tolerable, or which in fact must become little better than a fool's paradise to please the degenerate Christian. The growing desire after amusement marks a low state of religion, and it is likely to depress it still lower. It is the profession of a Christian, that he is not so much intent upon being happy in this world, as upon securing happiness in the next; that he is rather preparing for bliss, than possessing and enjoying it now; and that he can therefore be very well content to forego many things in which the people of the world see no harm, and the harm of which it might be difficult for him,

if called upon for proof, to demonstrate ; and which he is willing to abstain from, just because they appear to him to take him off from those pleasures which await him, and for which he is to prepare, in the eternal world.

IV. The spirit of trade, as it is now carried on, is no less adverse to a high state of religion, than the spirit of amusement ; and like that, is all the more dangerous because of the impossibility of assigning limits within which the indulgence of it is lawful, and beyond which it becomes an infringement of the law of God. Our chief danger lies in those things which become sins only by the degree in which an affection or pursuit, not wrong in itself, is carried, — such as covetousness, pleasure-taking, and attention to the business of life ; these all originate in things lawful in themselves, and which are sinful only by excess. Fornication, adultery, falsehood, robbery, and other vices, are all so marked out and so marked off, from the region of what is lawful, that the line of division is distinctly perceptible, and we can see at once when we are approaching the point of prohibition, and when we have stepped over it. But we cannot say this of worldly-mindedness. The love of acquisition and appropriation is one of the instinctive principles of our nature, planted in it by the hand of God, and intended to subserve the wisest and most beneficent purposes. The whole fabric of society is founded upon it, and all social organization is regulated by it. Trade may be said to be of God's appointment, if not directly ; yet by the law of labor under which we are placed ; and we cannot do without it. But then, like every other good, it may be abused and become an evil. It may exert so engrossing an influence over the mind as to absorb it, and to exclude from it the consideration of every other subject. It must never be forgotten that the rule is binding upon us all, to "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ;" to overcome the world by faith ; to set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. All this is as truly law, now, as it ever was ; and no attention to things seen and temporal, no labor even to provide things honest in the sight of all men, much more to provide things abundant and luxurious for ourselves, can

release us from the obligation of a supreme regard to things "unseen and eternal."

Now there never was, in the history of the world, an age or a country, in which the spirit of trade was more urgent, than it is in this land, and in our day. We are the greatest trading, manufacturing, and commercial country, not only that now is, but that ever was. Tyre, Carthage, Phœnicia, and Venice, were mere pedlers compared with Britain. Ours is "the mart of nations;" the emporium of the world. Such a state of things affects us all. Scarcely any stand so remote from the scene of busy activity as not to feel the impulse, and to catch the spirit. All push into the contest for wealth; all hope to gain a prize of greater or less value. Education has raised up many from the lower walks, and wealth has attracted down many from the higher walks, to the level of the trading portion of the community; while population, as is natural in such a state of things, has gone on increasing. What is the result? Just what might have been expected, — a keen and eager competition for business, beyond any former precedent. Every trade, every profession, every branch of manufacture, or of commerce, seems overstocked, and every department of action overcrowded. See what must follow — time is so occupied that men have scarcely an hour in a week for thoughtfulness, reading the Scriptures, and prayer — the head, and heart, and hands, are so full of secular matters, that there is no room for God, Christ, salvation, and eternity — competition is so keen and eager, that to get business, the whatsoever things are true, and just, and honest, and lovely, and of good report, are trampled under foot, and conscientiousness is forgotten or destroyed. If these efforts are successful, and wealth flows in, and the tradesman rapidly rises in society, then he is, perhaps, destroyed by prosperity. In addition to all this, what an inconceivable amount of mischief has been inflicted by the gambling system of speculation, which, though not set up, has been stimulated by the railway schemes. What multitudes have plunged into the gulf of perdition which yawns beneath those who have taken up the resolution of the men that will be rich, and who are determined to

encounter the many foolish and hurtful lusts which beset their path! Religion becomes a flat, insipid, and abstract thing, amidst all the excitement produced by such pursuits. Even the Sabbath day hardly serves its purpose as a season of respite and repose, given to arrest the eagerness of pursuit after wealth, and to loosen, for a while, the chain that binds man to earth; and is passed with an impatience that says, "When will it be over, that we may buy and sell and get gain?" Of what use are sermons to those whose minds and hearts are intent upon their speculations or their business? And even the voice of prayer, which calls them into the presence of God, calls them not away from their secularities. Their Father's house is made a house of merchandise, and the Holy of Holies a place of traffic. As soon might you expect a company of gamblers to lay down their cards, and, with the stakes yet undecided before their eyes, listen with attention to a homily or a prayer, as some professing Christians to join with reverence in the devotions of the Sabbath, or to hear with interest the voice of the preacher. The spirit of trade thus carried on is flattening the religion that is left, and is preventing more from being produced.

The great object of life to those professing Christians who have the opportunity, seems to be, to become rich. Their chief end does not appear to be so much to glorify God, and enjoy him forever, as to obtain and enjoy the world. Wealth is the centre of their wishes, the point to which their desires appear to preserve an invariable tendency. How many who have named the name of Christ, and avouched him to be all their salvation, and all their desire, still make "gold their hope, and say unto fine gold, Thou art my confidence." Jehovah is the God of their creed, but Mammon is the god of their hearts. Part of one day only, they profess to worship in the sanctuary of religion, and all the other six days of the week they are devout adorers of the god of wealth. Professing Christians! it is this worldly spirit that blights your hopes — that chills religion to the very heart — that withers your graces — that poisons your comforts, and

blasts the fair fame of your Redeemer's kingdom. While this spirit pervades the professing people of God, vital godliness will not only be low, but will remain so. How can it be otherwise than that the church will appear covered with the dust of the earth, and robbed of her heavenly glory, while there are few to weep over the woes of Jerusalem—few who struggle for her prosperity, who are affected by her reproach, or are jealous for her honor? Let us, then, be duly impressed with the fact that in this country and in this age, trade is contending with religion for the universal dominion over men's minds, hearts, and consciences, and that, according to present appearances, there is no small danger of the victory being gained by the former. Christians, take the alarm!

V. Among the hindrances to a spirit of earnest piety must be mentioned the political excitement which has so extensively prevailed in this country since the passing of the Reform Bill, and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Both these measures were just and right; and what is politically right, cannot in itself be morally wrong; they only conceded rights which could not be refused in equity, and did but redress wrongs which not only degraded the party that endured them, but also disgraced that which inflicted them, and thus wiped out blots which had long disfigured the British constitution, and sullied the page of English history. But at the same time, these great changes brought professing Christians into new perils, exposed their religion to fresh dangers, and rendered it necessary to give a greater vigor to that faith which overcometh the world. It is freely admitted, as has been a thousand times repeated, that in putting on the Christian, we do not put off the citizen; and do not, upon entering the church, retire altogether from the world. Religious liberty has an intimate connection with the interests of religion, for the freedom of the Christian cannot exist without the liberty of the man, and the stability and progress of the Redeemer's kingdom is considerably affected by the course of legislation. Hence it seems neither possible, if it were right, nor right, if it were possible, for professing Christians altogether to quit the arena of politics. Still, however, it must be confessed

that it requires a far larger measure of the life of faith than they appear to have possessed, to resist the paralyzing influence which comes from such a quarter over the spirit of piety; and the consequence has been that she has come out of the scene of strife, covered with its dust, and enfeebled by its struggles.

In such times as those of the great conflict against tyranny and popery, in the reign of the Stuarts, when everything dear to liberty and religion was at stake, the politicians and heroes of those days prepared themselves for the senate and the camp by the devout exercises of the closet — fed the flame of their courage at the fount of their piety — felt that they must be saints in order to be patriots — and expected to have power to conquer man, only as they had power to prevail with God. It might be truly said of *them* it was not that their religion was political, but their politics religious. Everything they did was consecrated by the Word of God and prayer. They were wrong in some things they did, and unwise in some things they said, but even this was at the dictate of conscience, though a misguided one. There were hypocrites among them no doubt, for it was hardly possible that such splendid virtues as many of them possessed should not be admired and imitated by some who had not the grace to be genuine followers: and an uncouth cast of phraseology and some modes of action no doubt marred their piety, but even these disfigurements could not conceal their manly spirits. Is it so now in our struggles for objects which, though of some consequence, are of less importance than theirs? Have we not all the ardor of political excitement, without the felt necessity of personal religion? Do we realize the need of a new baptism of the Spirit, to prepare us for political contests, and are we acting as if we were convinced that we must put on afresh the whole armor of God before we go into the battle-field of contending parties? Have *we* made *our* politics religious, instead of making our religion political? Have our pastors, when they have engaged in these matters, prepared themselves for it by communion with God; and have our senators, before they have gone to the place of legislation, and our councillors, and alder

men, ere they have entered the civic hall, fortified themselves, by fasting and prayer, with the spirit of religion? Have we not, on the contrary, lost in piety what we have gained in liberty, and felt "the powers of the world to come" weakened in their influence over us, in proportion as we have had a share in wielding the power of the world that now is? As dissenters, have we not been too anxious about our political influence? Or, at any rate, have we not, in seeking to increase this, lost something of a better influence which we should have labored to preserve? Perhaps it may be thought that this is the day of struggle for great principles — the reform of great abuses — the contest for lost rights — and the settlement of a wise, equitable, and permanent constitution of things, and that though the spirit of saintly and seraphic piety may suffer somewhat during the conflict, yet the time will come, by and by, when, having conquered an honorable peace, she shall sit down amidst the trophies that have been won, to heal her wounds, and recover her strength. I wish it may be so; but what if by venturing unnecessarily so far into the thick of the affray, she should receive wounds that are incurable, and sink into a state of exhaustion from which she cannot be easily or speedily recovered! What I say, then, is this, that if we must be political, — and to a certain extent we must be, — do not let us smile with contempt at the craven fears, or the superstitious apprehensions, or the ignoble whinings, as they will be called, of those who would remind us that a time of political excitement brings on a state of things which endangers all that is vital in godliness, damps the flame of devotion in the soul, and tends to depress religion in our churches.

But there are other excitements against which we have need to be on our guard, excitements which come still more within the unquestioned circle of religious activity. It is well for us to remember that true religion, even in its most vigorous and energetic course of action, is of a calm, gentle, and equable temperament. It resembles its Divine Author, of whom it is said, "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets;" it loves the quiet retreat of the closet, and

flourishes amidst the stillness of meditation ; to which it adds the tranquil pleasures of the sanctuary, and the soft and soothing delights of the communion of saints. It cannot live, and grow, and flourish, amidst perpetual agitation ; and it is ever placed in a dangerous position, in an atmosphere too troubled, and in an element uncongenial with its nature, when its active duties are pushed so far as to exclude the devotional ones. There are times when it must come out of its retreat, and mingle in the scenes of agitation and excitement. There are occasions when it must join the crowd, and let its voice be heard, not only borne upon the gale of popular sentiment and feeling, but swelling it. Yet this must be *but* occasional, and not habitual. If we look back upon the great questions which have called out professing Christians into the scene of agitation during the last half, or only quarter of a century, how many subjects of a public nature shall we find that have called up our consideration, feeling, and activity ! What a struggle we maintained, in what crowds we gathered, and to what a pitch of enthusiasm we were wrought up, for the removal of that foul blot upon our country's history — that heavy curse upon humanity — and that deep disgrace on our Christian profession — the slave-trade and slavery ! In what a troubled element have we lived of late, by contending against the various schemes of popular education, because we viewed them as unfriendly to our liberties as dissenters, and hostile to the manly independence of the people ! There are other topics, which need not be specified, tending greatly to agitate the church of Christ. The wonder, perhaps, is, and it is a cause for gratitude, that, considering these things, so much personal religion still remains. Yet it becomes us to remember that as this is an element uncongenial with its nature, there is the need of constant watchfulness, intense solicitude, and earnest prayer, that the churches, while contending for important objects, do not let down the tone of their spirituality.

VI. Even that which is the glory of the church in this age, and the hope of the world — which is one of the brightest signs of the times — and the loss of which would be an occasion to clothe the heavens with sackcloth.

and he earth with mourning — I mean the spirit of holy zeal which is so active, — yes, even this, for want of watchfulness, care, and earnest prayer, may become a snare and a mischief to personal godliness. We have need to take care that the reproach be not brought against us, that, while we have kept the vineyards of others, our own we have not kept; that our zeal has been maintained, not *by* our religion, but at the expense of it; that our ardor is not the natural putting forth of the vital energies of the tree, in branches, leaves and fruit, but an excrescence upon it, which draws to itself the sap and impoverishes the genuine produce. Ours is the age of societies — the era of organization — the day of the platform, the public meeting, the orator, the speech, and the placard. Everything is trumpeted, blazoned, shall I say puffed — not only our Missionary and Bible Society meetings, but our ordination services, formerly so quiet and so solemn; even the subjects of our very sermons, the most awful verities of our religion, must now obtrude themselves in glaring placards, and stare out in imposing capitals, side by side with advertisements of plays by celebrated actors — concerts by renowned singers — lectures by itinerant philosophers — and feats of agility by equestrian performers. All is agitation, excitement, and publicity, and religion is one subject for this among many others. Something of all this, no doubt, is proper, and cannot be otherwise managed at present, and ought not to be discontinued; but then, on the other hand, much of it is contrary to the dignity, the peacefulness, and the sanctity, of true religion. There is in some of our religious concerns too near an approach by far to mountebankship — to the newspaper puffing of noisy and obtrusive tradesmen — to the catch-penny trickery of quacks and impostors. Let us consider how the truly religious spirit — the lofty, heavenly, devout aspirations of the renewed mind, must suffer for all this; how true godliness must be corrupted and changed into a novelty-seeking, wonder-loving thing; how the flame of devotion must expire, or be changed into the fantastic fires round which little children dance in sport.

And where matters are not in this fashion, and there is

nothing but the mere reiteration of public meetings, yet may they not by their frequency draw off the attention from personal religion, and in many cases become a substitute for it? There are public meetings, and resolutions, and speeches, and anecdotes, for everything—and we must have them, and even be thankful for them, as long as the present mode of carrying on our schemes of evangelization are pursued. But then let us take care, anxious, prayerful, vigilant care, that these things do not exert an unfavorable influence upon us,—by producing a taste for excitement which shall make the ordinary means of grace, and Sabbath-day opportunities, tame, flat, and insipid—by throwing an air of frivolity over our whole religion—by drawing us out of our closets, and making us in religion resemble our Gallic neighbors, who are said to know little of home enjoyment, and who live almost entirely abroad—by making us ostentatious and vain-glorious, instead of humble and retiring—by impairing the modesty of our youth, who are so early brought into action and notice—by corrupting the purity of our motives through the publicity given to names and donations—by engrossing that time which should be spent in private prayer, reading the Scriptures, and meditation—in short, by converting our whole religion into a bustling activity *about* religion.

VII. The danger here set forth is not a little increased, in our day, by the modern invention and extensive prevalence of certain social convocations,—such, for instance, as tea-meetings. Of this species of fraternal intercourse our fathers were ignorant, and so were we ourselves till within the last few years; but now they are the prevailing fashion of the day, and are become so common, and in such frequent demand, as to have led in many congregations to the fitting up of a kind of culinary apparatus for their celebration. The incorporation of these social festivities with religious matters, though it prevails more among the Methodists and Dissenters, is not exclusively confined to these bodies, as some of the clergy of the Church of England have adopted the practice.

There are few things among modern customs which

more need the vigilance, caution, and supervision of Christian pastors and the churches, than these religio-convivial entertainments. There can be no harm in the abstract idea of Christians eating and drinking together, especially when the elements of the feast are nothing more expensive, inebriating, or epicurean, than tea and bread and butter, or cakes. There can be little doubt that the primitive Christians had their social meals, and that to these *agapæ*, or love feasts, as they were called, Jude refers, where he speaks of some who were "spots upon your feasts of charity." Out of this custom of having meals together, which were made appendages of the Lord's Supper, grew the corruptions mentioned in the first epistle to the Corinthians. The practice of eating and drinking together for purposes of unity and charity still continued in the early churches, till it was so abused to carnal purposes as to call for ecclesiastical interference, and by the council of Laodicea, in the fourth century, it was forbidden to eat and drink, or spread tables, in the house of God.

There is little fear, it may be presumed, of the modern practice of tea-meetings ever being abused in such manner as this; yet it becomes us to recollect that all corruptions were at one time only as a grain of mustard seed, which, sown in a congenial soil, advanced after the first insidious germination with rapid growth to unsuspected strength and stature. It is not, however, to what these entertainments may become, should the tea-meeting be exchanged for a supper, that I now allude, but to what they are already. I have been present at some, in which not only my taste as a man, but my sensibilities as a Christian, have been somewhat offended. I have seen the house of God turned into what had all the air of a place of public amusement; I have beheld grave ministers, and deacons, and members, of the Christian church, mingled up with professors, and non-professors, of religion, young men and women, boys and girls, in all the noisy buzz, and perhaps sometimes approaching to obstreperous mirth, at one of these meetings; I have witnessed young women of the working classes, dressed

up as ladies for the occasion, flirting about with their *beaux* of the other sex; in short all was glee, and merriment, and hilarity—and this, perhaps, in connection with some religious object; the anniversary of opening a chapel for God's worship, or the celebration of a minister's settlement with his flock. Probably it will be said by some, this is caricature. I am conscious it does not exceed the truth, and I might appeal to many of my brethren who have witnessed and lamented the same things.

To come to what is no less fashionable, but perhaps somewhat less injurious to the spirit of religion, than these things,—I mean the soirées of the present day; these also require some caution in their management, when held in connection with religion, lest they degenerate into a species of worldly amusement, the tendency of which will be to depress the tone of piety, and to destroy the seriousness of mind with which it ought ever to be regarded. Now I know that it is difficult to prove logically that these things are wrong, and I do not mean to assert that they are; by no means; but as they are the increasing custom of the day, and are liable to be abused, either by being too frequent, or by being held in a spirit of worldliness, I think the church of Christ, and for them I write, should be put upon their guard, and called to a spirit of holy vigilance. I know that the social, the cheerful, and even the tasteful, are sanctioned by religion, than which nothing is *more* social, cheerful and tasteful; and heaven is full of all these attributes. But, then, religion is at the same time no less characterized by solemnity, sanctity and deep seriousness, than it is by joy. It is that which connects the soul with God, with salvation, with heaven, and with eternity—it is the conflict of a soul fighting the great fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life—the agony of a heaven-born spirit, reaching after celestial bliss—the training of an immortal mind for the beatific vision of God and the Lamb—and, therefore, with which all our pursuits, and our pleasures too, should be in strict and constant harmony. When we affirm, as we most truly may, that

“ Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less,”

we should, at the same time, recollect that it puts aside many of the pleasures of the world as beneath our notice, if not injurious to our character, by others so incomparably superior, as to dispose us, by a natural process, to reject the drop for the sake of the fountain, and to lay aside the taper when we see the sun. We have only to consider what religion is, what it calls to, and what it requires of us, and leads us to, and is intended to prepare us for, to see at once, and to feel, as by a holy instinct, what kind of pleasures it should lead us to seek, and what to refuse. It will probably be asked, whether I would suppress all these modern usages of tea-meetings, soirées, and social entertainments. I reply, certainly not. They may unite much instruction, and much spiritual improvement, with as much innocent social enjoyment. But then I would watch them, with an entire conviction that they may by possibility come to what is harmful. I would limit their growth, that they do not become too frequent and too trivial; and I would, where religion is in any form their object, take care that they be conducted in a religious spirit. I would let religion, with all her cheerfulness, but yet with all her seriousness and sanctity, preside over the scene, and diffuse her blessed influence through every soul. If, as is usually the case, there are non-professors and unconverted persons present, I would let them see how happy Christians are, not indeed by transferring the pleasures of the world into the social circle of the redeemed, but by drawing down the pleasures of heaven into the church on earth. The way to win the ungodly to religion is not by showing them that their pleasures are ours, but that ours are infinitely superior to any which they know. A Christian ought to be, and would be, if he understood his privileges, the very type of bliss in himself, and an index pointing out the way of happiness to others.

It were well if the minister were always present at every tea-meeting held amongst any section of his flock, and were to endeavor to repress all undue levity as soon as it appeared, and to maintain a tone of rational,

religious and agreeable intercourse. The meetings of Sunday school teachers especially require his presence and his influence, not only to make them feel that he is in fact their supreme superintendent, and the teacher of teachers, but to prevent that excessive hilarity which would, perhaps, in some cases, be likely to spring up. And the pastor might also, with great propriety and utility, hold occasionally such meetings with the members of the church, and thus promote the unity and love of his flock among themselves, and their attachment to him. I adopt this plan myself. The church under my care is large, amounting to upwards of nine hundred members, and scattered over the whole expanse of this great town; and the public business and correspondence devolving upon me, in common with my brethren, are so oppressive that I cannot pretend to fill up the measure of pastoral duty; and, therefore, to remedy, as far as possible, this defect, I invite the members by sections to take tea with me in the vestry, when I converse a little with each individual separately, and then hold devotional exercises with them all collectively. At such meetings nothing, of course, but what is serious and devout occurs; all is solemn, joyful and to edification; all sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.

The object, then, of all these remarks will be seen; and that their design is to resist the tendency which some of our modern customs have to diminish the seriousness, repress the earnestness, and altogether change the nature of true religion—to impair the dignity, to lower the spirituality, and impede the usefulness of its professors—and thus, instead of making the people of the world religious, to make the members of the church worldly.

VIII. But, perhaps, there are few things which tend more effectually to repress the spirit of earnest piety, and to keep it down at a low point, than those fallacies about its nature, and that perversion of acknowledged principles and facts in connection with it, in which so many professors indulge. We will mention some of these.

Is it not clear that many persons satisfy themselves

with admitting the necessity of earnestness, without ever once endeavoring to obtain it, and thus put their conviction and admission of the necessity of the thing in the place of seeking after the thing itself? We talk to a cold or lukewarm individual, and represent to him the inconsistency of such a heartless religion as his, and the indispensable necessity of more devotedness. It is all, and at once, admitted; and he stops the conversation, gets rid of the subject, and evades impression and conviction by this ready assent. And thus, by such a facile, assenting, unresisting admission, the power of the awful truth that he is in a dangerous state, seems to be destroyed. It were better, far better, that these lukewarm professors should deny the necessity of more intensity of thinking, feeling, and acting, that they may be reasoned and expostulated with, and made to think by force of argument, and to feel by the power of representation. But in this easy admission, without opposition, question, or doubt, the strongest representation only goes in to be cushioned, and fall asleep.

And then the applicability of the subject to so many, if not to all, is another cause of individual evasion. "It concerns *me*," is the inward thought, "not more than all these myriads of professors." Its absolute importance as applicable to any *one*, seems dissipated in the idea of how *many* it is applicable to. There is some unthinking feeling, as if the authority and importance of the one great admonition to earnestness were divided into innumerable diminutive shares, with but inconsiderable force in each. How kindly and humbly each is willing not to account his soul more important than that of any of his fellow-mortals! Yet not so benevolent either, in another view of the matter; for in a certain indistinct way, he is laying the blame on the rest of mankind; if he is indifferent about his own highest interest, "they are under the same great obligation; in their manner of practically acknowledging it, they are my pattern; they keep me down to their level. If their shares of the great concern were more worthily attended to, perhaps mine would be also. One has fancied sometimes what might have been the effect, in the selected instances, if the case had been

that the Sovereign Creator had appointed but a few men, here and there one, to an immortal existence, or at least *declared* it only with respect to them. One cannot help imagining them to feel every hour the impression of their sublime and awful predicament! But why — why is it less felt a sublime and awful one, because the rest of our race are in it too? Does not each as a perfectly distinct *one* stand in the whole magnitude of the concern, and in the responsibility and the danger, as absolutely as if there were no other one? How is it less to him than if he stood alone? Their losing the happy interest of eternity will not be that he shall not have lost it for himself. If he shall have lost it, he will feel that they have not lost it for him. He should, therefore, now feel that upon him is concentrated, even individually upon him, the entire importance of this chief concern.”

Foster, in his lecture on “Earnestness in Religion,” from which this extract is taken, enumerates other fallacies by which men impose upon themselves in excuse for lukewarmness in religion, such as taking a perverse advantage of the obscurity of the objects of our faith, and of the incompetence of our faculties to apprehend them — the recognition of the obligations of religion upon our life, as a whole, without making them bear upon all the particular parts of it as they pass — and a soothing self-assurance, founded, the man can hardly say on what, that some how or other, and at some time or other, he shall be better: a kind of *superstitious* hope, excited by some particular circumstance, that he shall yet be improved, although at the time he makes no effort, and forms no intention, to amend.

There is no cause more fatal, in depressing true piety among its professors, than the notion that religion is to be regarded rather as a fixed state, than a progress; a point to be reached, rather than a course to be continually pursued. It is both; but it is only one of these notions that is taken up by many persons. Justification does introduce us to a *state* of favor with God; regeneration into a *state* of holy life; and membership into a *state* of communion with the church — but in addition to this,

there is the progress of sanctification — the going on unto perfection. It is to me extremely probable that many of the ministers of the Evangelical school have almost unconsciously, or inconsiderately, given countenance to this mistaken, because partial view, by dwelling too exclusively on the mere transition from a state of death to a state of life. They have shown that in the act of receiving the gospel, a man is at once changed both in his moral relation and moral condition. From that time he becomes another man, his *state* is altered — he passes from death unto life. But then this state is to manifest itself by a progressive development of the new principle. He is not only to be born, but he is to grow. It is fallacious to infer the growth, when we cannot infallibly determine the birth: it is much safer to infer the birth from the growth. The New Testament everywhere represents the Christian life by things denoting growth and progress: “The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” There is first the babe, then the young man, then the father in Christ. There is first the springing of the corn, then the blade, then the full ear. We are to abound more and more in knowledge, faith, and all holiness. The Scriptures never fail to keep before us the idea of advancement.

But this is almost entirely overlooked by many professing Christians; their idea is to get into a state of justification and regeneration, and having attained that, they are content. They repose in it. They have, as they imagine, escaped the tempest, and reached the shore in safety, and there they stand, exulting at best in their deliverance, without attempting to penetrate and possess the country they have reached. Their feeling is, “I am converted, and am in the church;” and there they stop. From the time they are received into fellowship, their solicitude begins to abate; from that point they sink down into the repose of those who are at ease in Zion — they have received their certificate of personal religion, and are satisfied. There is no great anxiety to grow in grace, to be ever advancing in the divine life, and to be ever making fresh attainments in holiness. If you see them ten or

twenty years after their profession was first made, you find them where you left them, or even gone back from first love ; their religion has had some kind of motion, but it has been stationary or circular, not locomotive ; it has gone upon hinges, not upon wheels, or if upon the latter, they have moved in a circle, not on a line. Yet what invaluable means of culture they have had ; what auspicious Sabbaths they have spent, what sermons they have heard, what books they have read ! Still their tempers are as unsubdued, their corruptions as unmortified, and their graces as stunted, as they were at first. No pupils make so little proficiency as those which are educated in the school of Christ ; in no case is so much instruction, so much discipline, bestowed in vain ; nowhere is improvement so little perceptible as here. How is this ? Just because these persons are laboring under the fatal mistake of their having come into a *state* ; reached a standing point, not a starting point ; gained an advantage, which render solicitude and progress unnecessary. They do not actually admit this in words, or even in thought, but, unconsciously to themselves, this is the secret working of their minds.

Akin to this is the sad abuse which is made of the humiliating fact that there is no perfection upon earth ; as if this should reconcile us to all kinds and to all degrees of *imperfection*. It is astonishing, and somewhat painful, to observe with what indifference, and almost satisfaction, this reflection upon our fallen humanity is made by some persons, as if they were glad to find in this admission a cover and an excuse for all their faults. Under the pretext that there is no perfection they do things at which a tender-hearted Christian, a professor with a delicate sensibility of conscience, would be shocked. They forget that the command of God is to “perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord ;” “to go on unto perfection :” to “be perfect ;” and that he who does not desire to be perfect, does not seek to be so, and does not lament his imperfections, and labor to remove as many of them as possible, discovers a heart not yet brought into subjection to the authority of Christ. The true earnestness of piety is an intense desire and labor after a perfect conformity

to the revealed will of God. The individual who has this mind in him can tolerate no imperfections, but sincerely wishes to discover all his faults; he searches his heart, and implores God to search it, in order that he may find them out, and put them away. He knows that the bliss of heaven arises in great part from the perfection of holiness, and he wishes to approach as near to heaven upon earth as he can, by coming as near as possible to perfect holiness.

What a different aspect would the church of God present to the world, and in what power and glory would its professors of religion appear, if it consisted of a multitude of men and women all striving and struggling after a perfect conformity to that law which makes it our duty to love God with all our heart, and our neighbors as ourselves — all anxious to come as near to a resemblance of God, and to have as much of the mind of Christ, as could be attained by any one out of heaven — all hunting after their short-comings and offences, and glad of any help to discover them, in order that they might be put away — all stimulating and helping each other on in the career of moral improvement — all watching and praying for the aid of the Divine Spirit to help their infirmities — what a scene, I say, would then be exhibited to an astonished world, on which the angels of God would delight to gaze! What less than this is the law of Christ's church? In what less interesting and important aspect than this ought the church of Christ to be seen?

It is not improbable that a dread of singularity, a fear of breaking through the barrier of conventionality, a dislike of being thought to be setting up as a reformer, have kept many back from seeking a higher degree of piety than has been exhibited around them. They have been conscious of prevailing defects, and of their own also, and under the stern rebuke of an enlightened conscience, have determined to advance to a more marked separation from the world, and a higher tone of spiritual feeling. From this resolution, however, they have been immediately and effectually deterred, by an apprehension of the remarks, perhaps the sneers, they would bring upon themselves from the lukewarm and the worldly, who

would taunt them for setting up as reformers of their brethren, and as affecting the odor of superior sanctity. This apprehension is strengthened in many persons by too low an estimate of their own influence. "What can I do?" they say; "I who am so obscure and uninfluential, to stay the torrent of worldly-mindedness which is flowing through the church? My example can do nothing for the good of others, and can only bring opposition, reproach and reproof, upon myself. I see the miserably low condition of professors around me, and I feel and lament my own; happy should I be to see a healthier state of religion in our church, and gladly would I follow in the wake of those who would attempt to improve it, but I cannot attempt this myself. I should only be laughed at as a person affecting what I did not possess, inflated by vanity, or cherishing the pride of singularity." Let such persons remember that whatever may be thought of their conduct by others, whatever influence it may have upon them, or whatever opposition it may provoke, they are not to take these matters into account: convinced of their short-comings, they are intensely and laboriously to seek to have them made up. Whether others will applaud or censure, follow or resist, approve or condemn, they are to go on. No dread of ridicule or reproach should deter them from growing in grace. They must dare to be singular; venture to go alone; determine, whether men will bear or forbear, to go forward. The church can never be improved if this spirit of timidity prevails. There could have been neither martyr nor reformer upon these craven principles. I tell the man who will be in advance of his generation, he will be the object of their envy, their suspicion, and their ill-will; and there will be no exemption from such treatment for the professing Christian who aims at a higher standard of piety than he sees in the church of which he is a member.

The people of the world will be less envious, jealous, and spiteful, towards a neighbor who excels them in honesty and integrity, than inconsistent and worldly-minded professors will be towards a fellow-member who has more piety than they have; just because their conscience

having a little more light, reflected from the example and exhortation of their more consistent neighbor, is thus rendered more sensitive, and is more easily wounded. Such persons are more censorious of superior holiness, and more tolerant of great imperfections, than any others; and he who would, by avoiding their sins, rebuke them, though it be in love, is sure to be the object of their dislike. But we must not be thus stopped in our endeavors after higher attainments in piety. We must follow out our convictions, endeavoring to live up to the standard set before us in God's Word, and not suffer ourselves to be deterred from our duty by the opinion of our fellow creatures, or fellow-professors. Our condemnation will be the greater, if, after our attention has been drawn to the subject, and our conscience awakened, we allow ourselves to be turned aside by the fear of either the frowns or the sneers of others. God will help us if we are willing to be helped, and raise us above all that fear of man which bringeth a snare. No one who is really in earnest to grow in grace, and to attain to more eminent piety, will be left to struggle on, unassisted in his endeavors. Divine grace will be made sufficient for him, and he shall be successful in his efforts.

At the same time, he must remember that his humility, meekness, and gentleness, must be no less apparent than his other excellences. It must be earnestness itself, and not the appearance of it merely, that he seeks and manifests; and it must be for its own sake, and not for the sake of gaining the character of it. There must be nothing even remotely approaching to the contemptuous disposition which says, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." No affected airs of superior piety — no offensive obtrusion of our example — no supercilious rebukes — no bitter censoriousness — no angry reproaches — but a piety, which, like the sun, shall be seen rather than heard, and shall diffuse its influence in a noiseless manner, and almost without drawing attention to its source. Such a profession *must* do good, however humble the station in life of him who makes it; and if all who are convinced by these pages of their own deficiencies, as well as of those of the church at large, shall attempt to make up

the latter by beginning with the former, this volume will not have been written in vain.

IX. This enumeration of the causes that tend to depress and injure the spirit of vital godliness would be incomplete if I did not mention the modern taste for frequenting watering places and travelling abroad. Having dwelt on this at length in "THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSOR," under the chapter, "The Professor *away from Home*," I shall only briefly advert to the subject here. There are few things which have had a more unhappy influence upon the middling and upper classes of professing Christians than this. Even those annual visits to the coast, or the inland places of fashionable resort, now so prevalent, are sufficiently pernicious in their influence to put all who have any regard to their eternal welfare most seriously upon their guard, against the temptations which are thus presented, by the sudden and complete transition from employment to idleness — by the removal of those salutary restraints with which they are surrounded in the habitations where they statelyly reside, and the mixed characters of the society into which they are almost necessarily thrown — by the amusements which are there most prevalent and fashionable — by the general air of dissipation which is thrown over the whole scene — by the interruption of their usual habits of devotion, private, domestic, and social — and by the indisposedness which is the consequence of all this, for the seasons and exercises of religion. These are no imaginary dangers, as the experience of all who have adopted this practice must attest, and as the total apostasy of some, and the backsliding of many, will corroborate.

This danger is of course increased by foreign travel, in numerous ways — by a removal from the usual means of grace — by the frequent desecration of the Sabbath — by associations oftentimes with worldly-minded companions — by a strain upon, and tampering with, conscience, in reference to many matters of very questionable propriety — and by the familiar gaze of mere curiosity upon scenes and customs known to be sinful. In all these ways may the spirituality of our minds, the tenderess of our conscience, and the delicacy of our moral sensibilities, be

impaired by those continental tours which are so fashionable and so fascinating. Their influence, no doubt, has been mischievous to an extent of which we are not aware, among many whose religion was already of a feeble and a doubtful kind. Nor have more vigorous spiritual constitutions escaped the influence of the malaria of these infected regions. But as the thing is lawful in itself, and only sinful when abused, let us, if disposed thus to recreate our minds, and gratify our curiosity which we innocently may, recollect that we are about to expose ourselves to peril, earnestly pray for grace to preserve us, and watch as well as pray that we enter not into temptation. As our best preservative from home, and at home — as one of the most effectual means of resisting temptation and promoting holiness, “Let us consider ourselves under the all-seeing eye of the Divine Majesty, as in the midst of an infinite globe of light, which compasseth us about both behind and before, and pierceth to the innermost recesses of the soul. The sense and the remembrance of the Divine presence is the most ready and effectual means, both to discovering what is unlawful, and to restrain us from it. There are some things which a person could make a shift to palliate or defend, and yet he dares not look Almighty God in the face, and adventure upon them. If we look unto him we shall be lightened; if we ‘set him always before us, he will guide us with his eye, and instruct us in the way wherein we should walk.’”*

X. The last thing I shall mention as tending to depress the spirit of true religion, is the spirit of sectarianism, which so extensively prevails among the various sections of the Christian Church.

By the spirit of sectarianism, I mean that overweening

* Scougal’s “Life of God in the Soul of Man.” Would God the whole generation of the professors of true religion of this day, and of every age, would read this most beautiful and incomparable treatise on practical religion! *This* is the religion we want, and of which we have too little. There is an edition of Scougal’s whole works, in one small volume, among Collins’ Select Authors, enriched by an inestimable Introductory Essay, by that able and eminent man, the late Rev. Richard Watson.

attachment to our distinctive opinions on doctrine, government, and sacrament, which leads to a disproportionate and often a distempered zeal for upholding and promulgating them; and to a state of alienation, if not of hostility, towards those who differ from us, notwithstanding their agreement with us in still more fundamental and important matters. This spirit of exclusiveness, which shuts out from our affection, sympathy, and communion, all those, however evangelical in sentiment and holy in conduct, who are not within the pale of our church, and which would seem to restrict all excellence to our own body, is, whatever its abettors may imagine, not only anti-social, but positively anti-Christian. It is the essence of bigotry; the germ of intolerance; and in its last development, the spirit of persecution.

That such a spirit of sectarianism as this does prevail, is the confession and the lamentation of all catholic-minded Christians. It might seem as if this spirit were itself an indication and an operation of earnestness. So it is of the earnestness of party, but not of piety. Saul of Tarsus had no lack of this when he was hastening to Damascus, and breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of Jesus; nor the Popish inquisitors in exterminating heretics by fire and sword; but who will call this the earnestness of true religion? It is zeal, but kindled by a spark from the flaming pit below. Zeal for lesser matters, to the neglect of greater ones, and which produces more dislike, or even indifference, to those who differ from us in these minor points, than friendship, sympathy, and love to them, on the ground of those more important ones on which we are united, is an antagonistic feeling to true piety. This is easily demonstrated. — It is an injury and opposition to that truth which is the basis of all religion, inasmuch as it depresses its more momentous doctrines, and gives an undue elevation to its lesser ones. — It is at open war with that love which is the greatest of the Christian graces, the very essence of religion, and without which all else is but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. — It introduces a foreign and corrupting element into true godliness, and

envenoms it with the poison of malice and wrath. — It diverts attention from primary to secondary matters, and exhausts the energies of the soul in bringing forth the fruits of contention, instead of the peaceable fruits of righteousness. — It cuts off the channels of sympathy between the different sections of the universal church, and thus deprives each part of the benefit of what may be found in the way of example, spiritual literature, and coöperation, in the other sections of the great fellowship of believers. — It tends to perpetuate our strifes and divisions, by extinguishing the spirit by which alone we are likely to come to ultimate agreement. — It fosters in many a disposition to infidelity, by disparaging the excellence and weakening the power of true religion. — It represses the spirit of prayer, and thus is a barrier to the spread of the gospel in the world — and it grieves the Holy Spirit of God, whereby he is induced to withhold his gracious influence.

Such are the consequences of sectarianism, and can any one doubt whether this is inimical to *religion*? It may substitute for the fervor of a pure zeal, a fiery turbulence; but this is not genuine piety; this is not the true vital warmth of a soul in full health, but the fever of a diseased and morbidly restless spirit. It is high time to stop the progress and destroy the power of this hateful temper. If we have not religion enough to vanquish sectarianism, sectarianism will acquire more and more power to vanquish religion. Let charity arise into the ascendant. We cannot do a better thing, either for the church, or for the world, than to seek for a greater degree of love among the friends of Christ. How has religion been tarnished in her beauty, weakened in her influence, and limited in her reign, by these contentions among her friends! Success, therefore, be to those efforts which are now being made, by the sons of peace, to bring the scattered and alienated followers of the Lamb into a closer union with each other; and whether the Evangelical Alliance shall continue to exist or not, in its present form and constitution, all good men must join in the longings and the prayers of our Divine Lord, when he thus

breathed out his heart for his disciples, "That they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they all may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

CHAPTER VIII.

INDUCEMENTS TO EARNESTNESS.

INDUCEMENTS! Can it be necessary to offer these? What! is not the bare mention of religion enough to rouse every soul who understands the meaning of that momentous word, to the greatest intensity of action? Who needs to have spread out before him the demonstrations of logic, or the persuasions of rhetoric, to move him to seek after wealth, rank, or honor? Who, when an opportunity presents itself to obtain such possessions, requires anything more than an appeal to his consciousness of their value to engage him in the pursuit? The very mention of riches suggests at once to man's cupidity a thousand arguments to use the means of obtaining them. What intense longings rise in the heart! What pictures crowd the imagination! What a spell comes over the whole soul! And why is there less, yea, why is there not intensely more, than all this, at the mention of the word *religion*, that term which comprehends heaven and earth — time and eternity — God and man — within its sublime and boundless meaning? If we were as we ought to be, it would be enough only to whisper in the ear that word of more than magic power, to engage all our faculties, and all their energies, in the most resolute purpose, the most determined pursuit, and the most entire self-devotement. Inducements to earnestness in religion! Alas, how low we have sunk, how far have we been paralyzed, to need to be thus stimulated! But since this is our state, we are at no loss for considerations which, with every reflecting mind, will be found to supply motives of irresistible potency.

I. How, without such a state of mind, can we be satisfied that we have any personal religion at all? Where is our evidence that we are *sincere* Christians, if we are not *earnest* Christians? Understand — consider — ponder, what it is we are seeking after and contending for. Let us recollect what we are professedly endeavoring to escape from — nothing less than eternal perdition — and not in earnest to flee from the wrath to come? Did any one, besides Lot's wife, to whom we are directed for a warning, flee from a burning house with lukewarmness and half a heart? Let us consider what we are professedly making the object of desire and pursuit — even glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life — and not *earnestly* seeking it? Did ever mortal yet, whose ambition led him to combat for a crown, engage with languor and supineness for the glittering prize? Is “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory,” an object so inconsiderable, and of such little value, that a person can really be supposed to be pursuing it, though he is a stranger to any ardor of soul in reference to it? Is religion a contradiction to the usual maxim that a man's activity in endeavoring to obtain an object is, if he understand it, in exact proportion to the value and importance which he attaches to it? Are heaven, and salvation, and eternity, the only matters that shall reverse this maxim, and make *lukewarmness* the rule of action? It cannot be; it is impossible; if the supine and careless professor be sincere, not only must all the principles of revelation be cancelled, but all those of our own nature be subverted.

Without earnestness you are not safe for eternity, and ought not to conclude that you are. Doubt and suspicion ought to rise at once in your mind, and you ought to fear you have never yet started for the incorruptible crown of life and glory. You are in the church only nominally. Your profession, it is to be feared, is hollow and false, and will be found utterly unavailing at last. You will add to the already countless multitude that have gone down to the pit with a lie in their right hand, and who prove that though men may be lost without earnestness, they cannot be saved without it. Would that I could alarm the care-

less, and awaken the slumbering professor! By what thunder shall I break in upon your deep and dangerous sleep? O, that it were possible to reverberate in your ears the echoes of the wailings of those who are mourning, in the bottomless pit, the sin and folly of an insincere profession of religion!

And then, even where there is sincerity, and, therefore, some degree of this intensity of mind, still it is your duty and privilege to go on increasing it. The more devoted you are, the clearer is your evidence of personal interest in the blessings of salvation. Your doubts and fears will be dissipated by such a state of mind, like the mists and clouds of the morning flying off before the rising sun. You will have the full consciousness that you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, by your joy and peace in believing, by your love to God, by your longings after holiness, by your spirituality, heavenly-mindedness and habitual communion with God. Your religion will be self-evident to yourself and to others. You will feel that your citizenship is in heaven, and that you belong more to another world than to this. You will need no voice from heaven, no messenger from God, no searching for your name in the book of God's decrees, to convince you that you have passed from death unto life. The actings of the new, the hidden and spiritual life, will be too strong and steady to leave you in any doubt that the principle of vitality is within. You will have the witness in yourself, and its testimony will be too loud and unequivocal to be unheard or mistaken.

Do, do consider, then, ye professors of religion, what it is about which this assurance is to be obtained—it is the salvation of your immortal soul! O revolve often and deeply the infinite realities about which religion is conversant! Most subjects may be made to appear with greater or less dignity, according to the greater or less degree of importance in which the preacher places them. Pompous expressions, bold figures, lively ornaments of eloquence, may often supply a want of this dignity in the subject discussed. But every attempt to give importance to a motive taken from eternity, is more likely to

enfeeble the doctrine, than to invigorate it. Motives of this kind are self-sufficient. Descriptions the most simple, and the most natural, are always the most pathetic or the most terrifying; nor can I find an expression more powerful and more emphatic than that of Paul, "*The things which are not seen are ETERNAL.*" What more could the tongues of men, and the eloquence of angels, say? "Eternal things!"—oh what subjects are veiled under that expression! Nothing less than eternal salvation—eternal perdition! Professing Christians, surmount your customary indolence; summon your faculties, and rouse your energies, to the consideration of this subject, and weigh the import of that phrase, ETERNAL THINGS. The history of nations, the eras of time, the creation of worlds—all fade into insignificance, dwindle to a point, attenuate to a shadow, compared with these *eternal things*. Do you believe them? If not, abjure your creed, abandon your Bible, and renounce your profession. Be consistent, and let the stupendous vision, which, like Jacob's ladder, rests its foot on earth and places its top in heaven, vanish in thin air. But if you *do* believe, then, say what ought to be the conduct of him, who to his own conviction stands with hell beneath him, heaven above him, and eternity before him. O, could you spend but one hour in heaven and hell, into one of which you *may* pass the next hour, and *will* pass some hour—could you be for so short a time the witness of ineffable glory, and inconceivable misery—could you see "the solemn troops, the sweet societies," of the celestial city, and the legions of accursed spirits which throng the dark domain of the infernal world; and then come back again to earth, would it be possible any more to attend to things seen and temporal, when such things eternal were before you? Politics would lose their fascination—business its importance—wealth its charms—fame its glory—pleasure its attractions—science its value, and even home its power to please. Heaven and hell—the soul and eternity, would annihilate forever all the vain things which now please you most. To every temptation that would

divert your mind from the salvation of your soul, you would say,—

“I cannot buy your bliss so dear,
Nor part with heaven for you.”

Indeed, you would be at once unfitted for earth. If you endured existence at all, you must quit society, retire to the hermitage, the convent, or the monastery. He who had visited the upper and the nether world could do nothing else than live to avoid the one, and prepare for the other; or to labor as Paul did after he came from the third heavens, to take others with him on his return.

By all the worth of the immortal soul, then — by all the blessings of eternal salvation — by all the glories of the upper world — by all the horrors of the bottomless pit — by all the ages of eternity, and by all the personal interest *you* have in these infinite realities, I conjure you to be in earnest in personal religion.

II. As another inducement to this, may be mentioned the certain connection between a high state of religion in this world, and an exalted state of honor and happiness in the world to come; or, in other words, the different degrees of glory in the celestial kingdom. We are too much accustomed to conceive of heaven and hell as places where the happy inhabitants of the one, and the miserable criminals of the other, will be, respectively, all upon a level; the one all equally happy, and the other all equally wretched. This is neither the doctrine of Scripture, nor the deduction of reason. If we consult the Word of God, we find it declared, in reference to the wicked, that “The servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” Luke xii. 47. So again it is said by the apostle, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Gal. vi. 7. “He which soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.” 2 Cor. ix. 6. Now the

solemn truth conveyed in this language, is this — that man's life is the seed-time for eternity — and that as here he is always sowing, so he will hereafter be always reaping; and that the harvest, both as to the kind and the quantity, will be according to the seed. They that sow good seed will have, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold, according to the quantity sown; while they who sow the seed of bad things will also have a harvest regulated by their seed, both in its quality and amount. God's rule of reward and punishment is a law of proportion. True it is, that in the case of the righteous and the wicked, there is on the part of God a different ground of procedure in reference to each, inasmuch as the punishment of the wicked is on the ground of their own desert, while the reward of the righteous is on that of Christ's merits — but this affects not the rule of distribution, since he who gives to a believer *any* measure of heavenly glory for the sake of Christ, may, on the same ground, give to another a far greater measure; he might do this in a way of pure sovereignty, but he has determined to do so according to the measure of holiness to which believers attain on earth.

This principle of different degrees of glory does not at all interfere with, or in the least oppose, the doctrine of justification by faith; nor does it affect the perfect happiness of the blessed in heaven. It will excite neither envy, jealousy, nor ill-will of any kind, since these passions will be all rooted out from the spirits of just men made perfect; and no other disposition, but that of perfect love to God and our fellows, will have any place in us. A being possessed of this perfect love, though the least and lowest in the scale of blessedness, would look up to all above him without the smallest taint of malevolent feeling. All will be perfectly contented, and, therefore, perfectly happy; and he who is perfectly contented knows nothing of envy; these states of mind are incompatible with each other. There may be vessels of an indefinite number of capacities, yet all may be full. Thus we can conceive of different degrees of glory, and yet no disturbance of the felicity of those who are subjects of them.

Now the law by which these varieties will be regulated will be, as we have already supposed, the attainments in personal religion, and the degrees of usefulness of Christians upon earth; and this law will help us better to conceive of the whole subject. We may imagine that every effort of vital godliness — every successful resistance of temptation — every reach after holiness — every mortification of sin — every aspiration after conformity to God — may have some effect upon the moral constitution of our nature, analogous to the exercise of our understanding or of our body, in strengthening our intellectual and corporeal frame. There may be an expansion, so to speak, of the spiritual nature, an increasing receptivity of glory and honor, ever going on, by our growth in grace on earth; the child of God may here, by his good habits in the school of Christ, and by his holy exercises, be preparing for a larger stature of the perfect man in heaven. There can be little doubt that the society of Paradise will be well compacted and orderly. There may be varieties of rank, station and employment; for aught we can tell, there may be rule, subjection and government; and therefore the different degrees of grace may be the discipline, the education, the meetness, for the different situations to be filled up, the posts to be occupied, in the celestial kingdom. There are not wanting intimations of this in the Word of God.

Besides, let it be remembered that we shall carry with us our memory to heaven, and will it be no bliss to remember what we did for God on earth, and how we attempted to serve Christ? Why, the apostle Paul felt this even on earth; and if the retrospect then afforded him such delight, how much more when he saw the results of all he did spread out before him in the celestial world! With what rapture would he *there* say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course!" How precious would be the recollection of all his sufferings, and all his labors! How it would delight him to look back, and recall to recollection his sacrifices and his services, not in a spirit of pharisaic pride, but of deep humility, and adoring gratitude and love. There he would realize the truth of his own words, "For what is our

hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." 1 Thess. ii. 19. Every soul he had been the instrument of saving would be a separate jewel to enrich and adorn his diadem of glory.

Just thus will it be with all others. Memory will add to their felicities also. The whole multitude of the redeemed will remember all they did for Christ, and think of it with delight; and they who have most to think of will have most bliss in the remembrance of it. The souls which they have been the instruments of saving will all be present to swell their rapture and augment their bliss. Nor will the enjoyment stop here. The blissful reminiscence will be enhanced by a divine eulogy, for Christ will add *his* testimony of approbation to all they did. Even a cup of cold water shall not lose its reward, if given to a disciple in his name. He will pass over nothing. He keeps a book of remembrance of those who even *think* upon his name; and he will mark with his special and personal commendation all we have done for him; and then they who have served him best will, of course, receive most of his gracious notice and commendation.

Professors, I appeal to you, then, on this deeply interesting and important view of our subject. True it is, that to be just within the threshold of your Father's house — to occupy the lowest room, and to perform the humblest service, will be amazing and unutterable grace — but this ought not to be an excuse for indolence, an apology for lukewarmness. If it be lawful for you to long for heaven, because there you shall enjoy the presence of your Lord, it is surely lawful for you to desire to press as near to your Lord as possible; the outer circle, the distant glimpse, the remote dwelling, ought not to be enough to satisfy your desire, or fill your heart. If it be lawful for you to covet heaven at all, because you shall there serve God, surely it is lawful for you also to aspire to the honor of doing more for him than you could do in one of the lowest posts. Call not this a spiritual selfishness, or an unauthorized ambition; it is no such

hing ; it is a legitimate yearning of the soul after the glory to be revealed. This, this, is your business on earth, you are training for heaven ; this is your work in the church militant, to be preparing for some post and place in the church triumphant. Is not this enough to make you in earnest ? Can you believe this, and *not* be in earnest ? Awake — arouse — put aside your earthly-mindedness — mortify your corruptions ! “ Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Pet. i. 13.

III. And without this intensity of mind, what is your religion ? Certainly not a source of pleasure, but of distaste. An earnest religion is that alone which is a happy one. To drink into the *pleasures* of religion, we must drink deeply of religion itself. It is with the happiness of piety as it is with ore in a mine, it lies far below the surface, and we must make a laborious descent to reach the treasure, but when reached, it is worth all the digging and toiling to get at it. Many professors, if they were honest, would say their religion is an incumbrance, rather than a privilege. It yields no delight ; they are strangers to the peace that passeth understanding, and to the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. They occupy a position half-way between the church and the world, and do not enjoy the pleasures of either ; they are spoiled for the one, without being fitted for the other. They have given up many of the fashionable amusements of the gay, and have received nothing in return ; and hence they turn many a longing eye on what they have left. They were happier as they once were ; they begin to think, and others think so too, that they are in their wrong place in being in the church of God, and were it not for the shame of retreat, they would be glad to be back again amidst former scenes. How much are they to be pitied, as well as blamed — and they are not few — who have just religion enough to make them miserable !

IV. We live in an earnest age, and religion cannot be expected to maintain its ground without a correspond-

ing decision and resoluteness of character.* The human mind was never more active than it is now; the human heart never more engrossed; and, in consequence, human schemes never came more thickly or rapidly crowding upon the public attention. There have been times when some *one* object has seized with a more absorbing power, and a more giant grasp, the intellect of the nation, such as a season of intestine commotion, of the dread of foreign invasion, of the prevalence of the plague, or other forms of pestilence—but these excitements have been of a kind which, while they occupied the mind, did not draw men away from, but drove them to, religion for succor and support. An awe of God, and a sense of the need of his interposition, came in such circumstances over the nation. While the tempest was rolling over us, and men's hearts were failing them for fear, they seemed to see Jehovah riding in the whirlwind and directing the storm. God was recognized as coming near to them, wrapped in cloud and speaking in thunder. But it is not so now; it is an excitement which, to a great extent, tends to shut out, and keep out, God from men's thoughts; and partakes, in some views and directions, of an atheistic character. Politics, both national and municipal, are engrossing, without being alarming; no spectral forms of national danger soberize the minds of men. Trade is a passion as well as a pursuit; science is all but miraculous in its discoveries, and is keeping our mind upon the stretch in admiration of what it has done, and in expectation of what it may yet do. Art is continually surprising us with new inventions. The railway system has almost changed our mode and habits of existence. We seem scarcely to be inhabiting the same planet as our forefathers. The press is astounding us with the rapid multiplication of its products. Our minds, hearts, hands, are all full—and what but an earnest piety can prevent our being totally swallowed up in the vortex, and carried away by the stream? If we have not an earnest piety in the midst of this earnestness for

* I am obliged here to travel over some of the ground I took in my "Earnest Ministry;" but I cannot avoid it, and shall do it now in a condensed form.

everything else, we can have no piety at all. Men are so full of action as to have scarcely time to think; and what thinking they can carry on is all of the earth, and therefore earthly. It is the idolatry of genius, the worship of talent, the ennoblement, almost the deification, of man, that characterizes our day. This generation seems in danger of thinking, or of acting, as if they thought there is nothing higher than human intellect. A sort of unacknowledged, unsuspected Pantheism is coming over us. God is by many shut out of his own world; nature is everything; its Creator, nothing.

Now *we*—as *Christians*—are in danger of being infected by this prevailing spirit. We never wanted more religion, or wanted religion more, than we do now. Upon it depends whether the Supreme Being shall be any longer acknowledged by his creatures, or his very name sunk in oblivion; and yet we are not in the best state to resist the assault upon the foundations of our piety. Earnestness is going out of the church into the world; and unless it can be revived among us, the church will go on sinking into a state of feebleness and decay. Instead of the church permeating the world with its own spirit, it is receiving the spirit of the world into itself. Instead of directing, controlling, and sanctifying the spirit and manners of the age, it is itself directed, controlled, and contaminated by them. Its own light has become pale, and is in danger of being extinguished by the mighty beams of a more intense fire blazing around from without. Earnest men of the world are crowding past, and thrusting aside the professors of religion, and Christians, in such a state of things, cannot stand their ground, much less advance, without a robust and athletic piety. They will be borne down, lose their spirituality, become spiritless and weak, and soon cast off their religion as having none of the life with which all things around them are instinct.

And then what chance have they, unless they are as flames of fire, of kindling a single spark in the souls of others? Men of the world are too busy, too much pre-occupied, too intent on other objects, to be broken in

upon, to be arrested, except by a most vigorous religion. They love excitement, and they have it; they must go with the men who are alive and active, and what care they for a poor, dull, sleepy religion — a mere name — a profession half dead? “Yes,” they say, “I am in earnest for this world, and I *must* be in earnest. I am made for activity. I have a vast fund of energy in my nature, which must be called out and employed, and I cannot put up with your drowsy tinklings, while the trumpets are sounding and calling me to the field. Show me a religion that is full of life, and vigor, and enjoyment, and I may then hearken to you, but not till then.” We must meet this demand, and exhibit a religion that in earnestness surpasses even the energy of their pursuits. Every Christian church should appear to be the region of life — a very hive without any drones — all busy for eternity, all engaged upon their own salvation and the salvation of the world; a scene which exhibits the union of activity and repose; where the one is without weariness, and the other without listlessness; where the true secret of happiness is found in hope without disappointment — energy without exhaustion — happiness without satiety — and life is in its fullest vigor and richest enjoyment. Such should be every church, a peaceful haven, inviting men to retire from the tossings and perils of the unquiet ocean of worldly troubles, to a sacred inclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of earthly interests are not permitted to invade; and yet where the happiest employment is combined with the sweetest and safest tranquillity.

V. Consider the combined and deleterious influence which is likely to come against Christianity from the engrossing power of some things, good in themselves, and evil only by their association with other matters — such as science, philosophy, and liberalism in politics; and the positive and increasing influence of others — such as popery and infidelity, which are evil, only evil, and that continually.

SCIENCE of itself is of God, and leads to him, if men will but give themselves up to its legitimate deductions, and will allow themselves to be guided whither it would

conduct them, since its conclusions would infallibly lead them to the temple of religion. But, alas! how rarely is this the case! the most distinguished of our scientific men stand without, or reach only the vestibule of the temple, and instead of pressing on to adore the Deity enshrined in the holy of holies, are contented to admire the fair proportions and stupendous magnitude of the sacred edifice. Science cannot, of course, be made to speak of God the Saviour and the Sanctifier, but it may be made a teacher of God the Creator. But how rarely is even this done! For aught that is said by many of our great teachers of nature's laws, of the supreme, intelligent, and benevolent First Cause, we might be left to conclude that we lived in a godless world, and that we saw around us either the works of chance, or at any rate the productions of a being whom it was not thought worth while to inquire after. Nor does the matter rest here, for many are endeavoring by science to lead us away from God, and thus making the very works of the infinite Intelligence a blazing galaxy to eclipse the glory of the eternal Creator, and lure us to the brink of Atheism or Pantheism. And where this is not done; where neither the teacher nor the taught has any intention or wish to go astray from God amidst the boundless fields of a universe ever widening upon the exploring and astonished mind; yet how much danger is there, lest the surprising discoveries which are ever and anon bursting upon our view, should by their novelty and their grandeur render the old and long established truths of revelation tame and insipid! How imminent, to cultivated minds, is the peril, when engaged amidst the all but overwhelming studies of geology, chemistry, astronomy, magnetism, electricity, and optics, of passing by, with heedless step and averted eye, that cross on which the Saviour loved and died! How sad, and yet how true, is it, that the more God reveals himself through the discoveries of science, the more he should be forgotten, and even denied, as he reveals himself in the pages of his Word! What else can this be but the ancient disposition of not liking to retain the knowledge of God, and the ancient revulsion, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of *thy* ways?"

But even with pious people, who, in their more serious moments, trace up all science to God, and find cause in his works for adoring wonder, gratitude, and love, there is need of caution, watchfulness, and prayer, lest a love for general reading, and the constant occupation of the mind amidst the fields of knowledge, which are ever opening before them, should lead the heart away from God. Not a few, in soaring to the stars, or delving into the earth—in analyzing substances, and ascertaining properties—in balancing theories of currency, population, and other matters, connected with the wealth of nations, have lost their relish for the truths of the kingdom of God, and instead of feeling any longer the attractions of those things into which the angels desire to look, are wholly taken up with the objects of this material and visible world. This is *the* snare of our age—such an occupancy of the mind by the varieties of knowledge which are ever presenting themselves, as that there shall be neither room, nor time, nor taste, for religion. “The value, the uses, the pleasures of knowledge, and the best means of acquiring it,” is the cry of the age—and a very good one, in measure, it is—but then it is crying down, with many, everything else; it is insidiously alienating men’s minds from religion, by throwing the great moral truths of revelation into the shadow of a material philosophy; and making men feel as if the tree of knowledge were the tree of life, or at any rate as if, by eating the fruit of the former, they could dispense with the fruit of the latter, and either do without heaven hereafter, or were fitted for it by the science they gain upon earth. Christians, as well as others, are in danger from this source, and instead of growing in grace *and* in general knowledge, which they may and should do, have grown in knowledge, but have declined in grace.

Let me not be misconceived nor misrepresented, as if I were pleading against knowledge, as if I conceived it were an enemy to revelation and religion. No such thing. I am only pleading against it as the *substitute* of religion, as that which would be of itself sufficient for man’s moral and immortal self, *without* religion. I adopt

the noble language of Mr. Wells in his lecture upon the instruction of the laboring class.

“ If it be asked, What limits would you place on the education of the working classes? the answer is ‘ NONE.’ Teach them all you can by any means induce or enable them to learn. How far would you carry the instruction of the working classes? As far as possible. . . . But, apart from this, who is afraid of knowledge? of sound, healthful intelligence? Of knowledge, the light and joy of souls! Of knowledge, the object for which minds were made, and their faculties given! Of knowledge, in capacity for which, man resembles his Maker; and in acquiring which, he communes with all created things! Of knowledge, the foe of everything infidel, sensual, and brutal? What page of history, science, or genuine poetry, must we close from any man, saying, here knowledge is perilous — here ignorance alone is safety? Of what discovered facts in nature — of what refined productions of genius — must we say, ‘ These are the luxuries of the few alone?’ If, indeed, only of the few, those few are not the favored in circumstances, but the select in mind, and these may be found among the working classes in as large proportion as among the privileged classes; and wherever they may be found, there they should be sought, that at this uncostly and noble banquet of mind they may be welcome guests, and joyful partakers. Lift up the people, cheer on the people, to as much acquisition of knowledge as possible. Raise everywhere the standard of mind. If some, if many, so encouraged and helped, press upwards into higher departments and circumstances in society, so much the better. They will bring health and power with them into the ranks by which they will be hailed as brothers, not scowled upon as intruders. No, teach the people all they can learn, all they will learn.”

LIBERALISM in politics, however excellent in itself, is made, perhaps, by an abuse of it, to exert an influence far from friendly to genuine piety. The love of freedom is, or ought to be, with every Englishman, both a principle and a passion: and he who does not wish to literate

the constitution of his country from the last remnant of servility, which is degrading or oppressive to a free man, dishonors the soil which has been consecrated by the blood of patriot martyrs. But it must be confessed, at the same time, that the liberalism of our days has been seen too nearly allied, in some cases, with a spirit hostile to religion. There is no necessity it should be so; the very genius of Christianity is a spirit of freedom, and all its precepts are opposed to tyranny. It defends with impartiality the palace and the cottage — the prerogative of the monarch, and the rights of the subject; but unhappily the priest and the altar have been so often on the side of oppression that the cause of freedom has been thrown too much into the hands of infidels; and there is no doubt that, in modern times, at least, nearly the whole force of infidelity has been on the side of freedom. This proves the duty and the necessity of all the friends of religion rallying round the standard of liberty, and not leaving such a cause in the hands of the foes of revelation. It is preëminently their cause — they have suffered more than any others from the iron heel and bloody sword of tyranny; and that which has trodden down their persons has trampled their principles and their cause with them in the dust, so that liberty is to them not only a source of their enjoyment, but a means of their usefulness. The last leaning in them to the side of absolutism or servility is a sin against their holy religion, in its prospects and its hopes, as well as an offence against their own dignity and honor. Happily for themselves, happily for their cause, and no less happily for their country and the world, they now live in an age when the principles of religious freedom are better understood and appreciated than in any preceding period of the world; and it becomes them more and more to take heed not to let it be the boast of infidels that they are the staunchest friends of liberty. *Their* liberalism goes to the destruction of religion altogether. Man, in their view, is not free as long as he is bound by, what they are pleased to call, the fetters of superstition. He is a slave while he bows to the yoke of God, and from this they are eager and officious to liberate him. Let

any one read the organs of the extreme Chartist party, and he will see this is no false accusation. And even many of those who would spurn with disdain and loathing these infidel liberals, hold opinions of a character very loose on the subject of religion. The tendency of much of modern argument, policy, and legislation, is to represent all religions, as they are called, equally good, that is, in the opinion of many, equally worthless. Instead of endowing none, and thus leaving truth to its own strength, to fight its own battles under the protection and blessing of the God of truth, they would endow all, as being all equally deserving of public patronage and support. If by religious equality nothing more were meant than the equality of all religious denominations in political rights — this is nothing more than justice — but if it be meant, as it is by many, the equality of all religious sentiment — this is concealed infidelity. When such a state of public opinion prevails among a large portion of those who have embraced liberal views of politics, is there not a danger of some corrupting influence coming over the minds of those professors of religion who, having also embraced liberal opinions, are brought by association into contact with the infidel party? Is there not need of a vigorous piety to resist the insidious influence of this mischievous leaven? Is it not a matter of necessity that they should look up by prayer for divine grace, lest their politics, or at any rate their party in politics, should weaken and corrupt their piety? Liberalism is a good thing, and has a good object, but like other good things may be abused to a bad purpose; and that is certainly a bad use of it which either damps the ardor of religious affection, or loosens our hold upon religious opinions.

It is quite unnecessary, after what has been advanced on this subject in a former chapter, for me to advert at any length to the prevalence of INFIDEL spirit, in its open, avowed, and studious endeavor to undermine the foundations of our faith; I therefore now only refer to it, as another inducement to seek after a vigorous and manly piety to grapple with this foul spirit.

There is another enemy of our faith, more plausible,

more insidious, and therefore more dangerous, with which the church will soon have to contend, and the conflict with which indeed is already begun; and that is the *philosophizing, rationalizing, spirit*, which is coming over us from Germany. This, aided by the works of a popular English writer, is likely to diffuse itself over the cultivated minds of this country. It is already, in some measure, corrupting our orthodoxy, and in its progress will do yet more mischief, if not resisted by the religious intelligence of the tutors of our colleges, the editors of our religious periodicals, with some of whom it finds too much favor, our influential pastors, and the well instructed members of our churches. The pith of this system is the old dogma, though somewhat differently presented, of the early English free-thinkers, that reason rather than faith is our guide in religious matters; and its tendency is to prove that Christianity is a worn-out system of superstition, and must now give place to something more rational and more accordant with the spirit and advancement of the age. The progress of this system is written in fearful characters by D'Aubigné, in his interesting work lately issued, entitled "Germany, England, and Scotland." After describing the progress of this system, from the old Unitarian Neology, to downright atheism, he remarks, "Thus Germany has exhibited within the last few years a terrible, yet no doubt a salutary, spectacle. The great lesson to be derived from it is, to yield nothing when the truth of God is concerned. If we take but one step backwards, we give the first impulse to go a hundred, a thousand, and we know not what will be the end. Infidelity in Germany has not been confined to a few obscure writers, obliged to hide themselves in some corner, and reduced to communicate their blasphemies to a small number of contemptible adepts. Such may be the case in England, but it is far otherwise in Germany. These men have been listened to with favor by the cultivated classes. In the course of the summer (1845) while I was in Germany, a great meeting of German writers, for the most part infidel, was held at Leipsic; and there, one Mr. Jordan, of Königsberg, at a dinner of these literary men, proposed a toast to *The*

Atheists! I will not repeat the terms their impiety makes me shudder; an icy coldness and a dead silence pervaded the assembly.

“This modern impiety of Germany has been accompanied by great immorality; and as faith is manifested by works of charity, so does atheism show itself by the grossest materialism. The young German generation have declared, in one of their organs, that they will be free, throw off, as oppressive bonds, all laws of civil order, of ecclesiastical and religious institutions, and finally emancipate themselves from the yoke of moral principles.

“It is whispered that a young German party, forming at Oxford, is desirous of planting in England the doctrines of Hegel and Strauss.* I do not know the opinions of that school; but if it belong to the modern German philosophy, it is easy to see the course it will follow, and whither it will lead England. Oxford would thus pass from the extreme of superstition and formality, (Puseyism,) to the extreme of unbelief and materialism. I trust the British good sense—the practical sense of Englishmen—will confine these follies to a few men in a few colleges. *Yet let us beware. If all the friends of Christian religion and morality do not increase in decision, holiness, and zeal, we may perhaps see them raising their heads in every quarter.*”

It is not, however, the gross and extreme development of German philosophy which is to be expected and dreaded in this country. English individuality is too strongly marked, not to impress upon it a peculiar stamp; its tendency will be greatly resisted and modified by our more practical understanding, and its grosser, and more polluted and polluting elements will be arrested in passing through the filter of our common sense philosophy—but even then, it is to be feared, it will come out strongly impregnated, in many cases, with necological principles. It may, as I have remarked in my work on “An

* A work of this description has lately appeared in Oxford, entitled “The Spirit’s Trials—Shadows of the Clouds,” by ZETA. See a full exposure of its Pantheistic doctrines in the Oxford Protestant Magazine, for January, 1848.

Earnest Ministry," exert a baleful influence upon our young ministers, which, though it may not corrupt their orthodoxy with positive error, may becloud it with the abstractions of metaphysics; and instead of leading them to seek the salvation of souls by the simple, yet powerful, exhibition of truths that come home to the heart, may make them desire to excite admiration by novelties of speculation, that surprise and amuse the intellect. Nor is this the only danger, for many of their more intelligent, and less pious hearers, especially the young, finding their taste for novelty gratified, their love of what is intellectual pleased, and their conscience, hitherto not altogether easy, tranquillized, by something not quite so pungent and searching as that which they have been accustomed to hear, will take up with these new views, and push them on to a point much beyond that where the preacher has placed them. Even the more pious, by having their minds too much alienated from the simplicity that is in Christ, are in danger of losing their relish for the substantial verities of the gospel, and acquiring a taste for something fresh, and, as they deem, more intellectual than the doctrines of grace. The life of faith is thus imperilled by substituting, for that which alone can nourish its vital principle, a system which appeals exclusively to the reason.

It is this, then, that we have to fear, the elevation of reason, and the depression of faith; observant minds have perceived signs of this already, not to be doubted or mistaken, among some of the more intelligent members of our churches. The roots of our evangelical system are in danger of being eaten into by this canker worm, and the heart of our experimental religion of being organically diseased, by this cold and paralyzing intellectuality. Even some of our educated religious operatives begin to crave after something newer than the gospel, something more speculative than the doctrines of salvation, and something more rational than faith. They who are not acquainted with the workings of the popular mind, and the progress of opinion, may smile at the apprehensions which are here expressed; but others, more attentive to the course of events, and therefore bet-

ter acquainted with them, will be most ready to admit there is *some* ground for alarm, and abundant reason for caution.

Another source of danger must be also mentioned; and that is the growing taste, in an opposite direction to that I have just adverted to, for FORMALISM and SUPERSTITION — a religion of forms and ceremonies — a devotion which shall have more to do with the imagination and the fancy, than with the understanding, the heart, and conscience, and which shall gratify the possessor of it in the allowed indulgence of his own self-complacency. This religion, in its more modified forms, is Puseyism, and in its full development, Popery. The illusion that Popery can flourish only in dark ages, and in enslaved countries, begins to be dispelled by the facts that have lately transpired amidst the light of the nineteenth century, and the freedom of England. The increase of Popery in this country is no longer matter of doubt; and it is an astounding and somewhat alarming fact, that its efforts have kept pace with the extension of education, the circulation of Bibles and tracts, and the formation of institutions for its destruction. How shall we account for this? As Protestants we cannot for a moment allow that there is more in Romanism than in its antagonistic system to commend itself to the unbiassed judgment of the impartial inquirer; no, it is to be accounted for, *by the greater earnestness of its advocates*; and what a deep disgrace, an indelible blot is it, upon the advocates of Protestantism, that they should be exceeded in zeal by the votaries of Romanism; that the crucifix should be the fount of a deeper inspiration than the cross! How are we to account for that extraordinary fact, and solve that hard problem, that error, at least in very many cases, according to appearance, excites in its abettors a more fervid enthusiasm than truth does in hers?

Such, then, are the influences, — powerful when viewed separately, how much more so when combined! — which are exerted in this extraordinary age against religion; and how are they to be resisted and vanquished? How shall the church bear up against such opposition? We

know her Divine head lives. The infallible, omnipotent Pilot is at her helm, and though the tempest rages, and the deep is stirred up from the very bottom, the holy vessel is safe. Yes, but even this divine Pilot demands the attention, the subjection, and the coöperation of the crew, and employs their instrumentality for the preservation of the sacred bark.

The danger is not to be warded off by mere systems of ecclesiastical polity ; these, in proportion as they are brought into conformity with the Word of God, may do something ; and may, and should, be sustained with a zeal proportioned to their importance ; but of themselves, without a pervading spirit of evangelical piety, they will be no better defence against popery, infidelity, and an anti-Christian philosophy, than would be a breakwater of sand or wicker-work, against the assault of the Atlantic Ocean in a storm. Nor will any mode of worship, whether arranged according to liturgical order, or left free for the occasion. No, nor the most approved orthodox systems of theology ; the most noble, and even scriptural, confessions of faith ; nor creeds that can boast the highest antiquity, and the consent of the whole catholic church. The spirit that is coming over Christendom laughs at all these things, when left to themselves, like leviathan at "the shaking of a spear," "esteeming iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood." What did creeds, catechisms, and symbols, accomplish for Switzerland, where Rationalism and Unitarianism, in spite of them, have covered the scene of Calvin's labors ; or in Germany, where they have desolated the garden of the Lord, planted by Luther and Melancthon ? A cold and heartless orthodoxy, however clear, wins no more respect from infidelity or philosophy, than the gorgeous rites of superstition. An effete and languid church, a church of which the *vis vitæ* of experimental religion is low — of which the pulse beats feebly and slowly — of which, whatever deceptive show of health there may be upon the countenance, the vitals are diseased — of which it may be said, thou hast a name to live, and art dead — such a church cannot stand the shock which may be made upon our faith.

What is it, then, which we must oppose to the swelling

tide of opposition, should it rise against the evangelism of the New Testament, and by which we may invest the church with a power, not only to stand her ground, but to advance? What? **EARNEST RELIGION.** A church in earnest can never be vanquished, or even effectually opposed. It is the union of two things, which ought never to be separated, I mean **SOUND DOCTRINE** and **THE SPIRITUAL LIFE** — an intelligent, public, courageous profession of evangelical truth, and the inward power of that truth upon the affections; the clearness of a martyr's intellect to perceive the nature and the value of Christian doctrine — the ardor of his zeal in espousing it — the love of his heart in embracing it — and the integrity of his conscience in being willing to die for it. An enthusiasm of feeling which is not fed by an intelligent apprehension of doctrine, will soon expire of itself, or be extinguished by the breath of opposition; an emotionless and merely scientific profession of doctrine, which leaves the heart without warmth, and the life without holiness, is scarcely worth retaining, and in the hour of trial will be thought scarcely worth contending for, and either thrown away in contempt, or yielded up to the foe.

Let the orthodoxy of our churches be well and vigorously maintained; let there be no relaxation here; let the doctrines of the Trinity, the fall and inherent depravity of man, the atonement, justification by faith, regeneration by the Spirit, and the sovereignty of divine grace in man's salvation, be considered as the very life's blood of our piety; let these great fundamental doctrines, or facts, for such undoubtedly they are, and as such should be considered, be held fast by us, not as cold, dry dogmas, but as living principles of the heart, imparting and maintaining a new and vigorous existence to the soul; and then may we confidently and triumphantly bid defiance to the combined forces of all the enemies of religion and the church. There has come upon us of late years a kind of creed-hatred, so intense that many shudder at the idea of catechisms, confessions, and articles, as if under all circumstances they were a fetter upon our liberty, and a snare for our conscience! But is not this

alarm groundless? D'Aubigné's words on this subject are full of wisdom: "As for those who know what salvation in Christ really is, what harm can the articles do them? None! indeed, rather the reverse. Every true Christian has a spiritual life, an inward history, composed of distinct phases—faith, repentance, justification, and conversion; sanctification, peace, joy, and hope. It is requisite both for the sake of others, as for his own, that he should profess the great doctrines to which his inner life corresponds. Poor and ignorant Christians—and these are the greater number—would not know how to do this. If the church to which they belong presents to them an evangelical confession of faith, at once plain and profound, it renders them a very useful assistance. Theologians could, no doubt, without a creed, easily give utterance to their faith, but we must think first of the poor and simple of the flock. Men of the world regard the articles of faith of the Reformation as antiquated forms, because unnecessary in the present age. This error arises from their having never experienced in their hearts that faith in Christ which is the same in every age. Those confessions of Christian hope which our fathers made even in the face of Rome, and for the sake of which so many martyrs have ascended the scaffold, can never grow old, can never lose that divine fire which the Holy Spirit imparted to them. It has been said, 'The articles are useless to the church; the Bible is sufficient.' But most frequently, at least upon the Continent, those who will not have confessions of faith will not have the Bible either. Very lately, one of the most eminent Protestant clergymen of Germany, Dr. Ammon, first preacher of the court at Dresden, a rationalist, but yet an enlightened theologian, made this candid avowal: 'Experience teaches us that those who reject a creed will speedily reject the Holy Scriptures themselves.' The importance given to doctrine in the Church of England is her safeguard. Without it, she would long ago have fallen beneath the assaults, not of rationalism, but of traditionalism and superstition. Let the ministers and members of the church set forth and maintain once more the pure doctrines of grace, as contained in the Bible, and stated in the thirty-

nine articles ; let them raise on high, and firmly wave, that glorious standard, and the evil spirits will flee away." And in his remarks on Scotland, the same author asks, "What has secured Scotland this eminent rank of being at the present period the vanguard of Christ's army? I hesitate not to reply, 'Her attachment to sound doctrine.' It is because doctrine is placed so high, that the church meets with so much sympathy. Whenever doctrine is not cared for, the people care little for the church, and a miserable *esprit de corps* alone remains, which is the most opposed of any to a Christian spirit. The church itself is doctrine. The most characteristic distinction between the Christian church and Paganism, Mahometanism, and Deism, either pure or Socinian, is the Christian doctrine, as essentially different from the Pagan, Mahometan, Deistical, or Socinian doctrines. This also distinguishes the Roman from the Protestant church. Observe, when I speak of doctrine, I do not mean a cold, arid, lifeless orthodoxy ; I mean 'the doctrine which is according to godliness,' as the apostle says ; 'that doctrine which produces life.' The Scottish theologian places himself at once in the centre of the Christian doctrine ; it is on faith in the reconciliation by the expiatory sacrifice that he takes his stand. This grand dogma, which tells us at once of the sin of man, and the grace of God ; this fundamental doctrine, which contains, on the one hand, the consciousness of our guilt, and, on the other, the assurance of an irrevocable counsel of mercy and salvation, is the vivifying centre of Scottish theology. Faith in the Lamb of God who has borne the sins of the world ; this is the milk with which the Scottish child is fed in the schools of the towns, the mountains, and the plains ; and the strong meat whose nourishing juices are dispensed by the theologians of Edinburgh or Glasgow to the future ministers of the church."

All this is admonitory to us ; and should remind us of the fact, and deeply impress us with it also, that it is only by holding up the truth as it is in Jesus as the principle of faith and spiritual life, we can hope to preserve the church from being imperilled by the spirit of the age. *This* is the true breakwater which alone can resist the

billows of prevailing errors, and protect the vessels which lie peacefully at anchor in the harbor. Let our pastors diffuse these great doctrines among their flocks, and lift them on high in the pulpit. Let there, I repeat, be no coquetting with a false philosophy, and no complimenting, by the suppression of the truth, even a true one. The doctrines just before enumerated must be the very staple of their sermons. Let the people also look for, require, and live upon, these truths. The man who habitually suppresses them, or studiously avoids them, with whatever of novelty, eloquence, or profundity of thought and expression, he attempts to supply their place, should be viewed as a suspected man—he who sparingly introduces them, as a lukewarm man—and he only, who dwells much and earnestly upon them, as an acceptable man. In a philosophic age, and among an enlightened people, Paul “determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified;” and it would be difficult for any man to find a reason why this rule of apostolic ministry should be departed from in this day. True it is that ignorance would circumscribe the doctrine of the cross within narrower limits than the apostle intended, since every portion of revealed truth has its centre there; but still, the doctrine of the cross must be the great theme of preaching in every age, and in ours among the rest. I say, with all possible deliberation, and with equal emphasis, to the churches, let nothing less, nothing else than this, satisfy you. This is the bread of life, which cometh down from heaven for the nourishment of your souls; without which you will starve and perish. You can live on nothing else. Say, therefore, to your ministers, “Evermore give us this bread.” Do not accept of the stones of metaphysics or logic, instead of this, nor the flowers of rhetoric, nor even the fruits of science or literature. Let your request be for bread, the living bread, which is Christ. It is no favorable sign of health when the palate has ceased to relish bread and meat, and is ever craving after novelties, and can be pleased only with the piquant dishes of an inventive and artificial cookery. Such a taste indicates incipient disease, and prognosticates its increase. The parallel case in spiritual

things is to be found in those hearers of the Word of God who have grown tired of Bible truth, the bread and meat of the gospel, and can relish nothing but poetic sentimentalism — rhetorical imaginativeness — or religious Carlylism.

I do not mean to say that the whole system of Christ's mediation is to be brought into every sermon, for I am of opinion that the pulpit may be sometimes employed to explain and inculcate other subjects than such as are strictly and exclusively doctrinal, but its predominant character should be truly and richly evangelical. It will be a dark sign of the approach of an evil day, — and there are not wanting such portents upon our horizon already, — when our churches in choosing their pastors shall be guided rather by a regard to talent than to piety — by a love for eloquence, rather than the gospel.

Not that piety and love of the truth constitute the only qualifications of an able minister of the New Covenant ; or should be the sole ground on which a church should rest its choice of a pastor. By no means. We must have men of talent, especially for our more important stations — men that will command attention — men that will have power over the public mind, and do some justice to the high themes of their ministration. But when talent is the first thing, and piety and sound doctrine are viewed as quite secondary matters — where the declaration is, not, — “ We want an able preacher of the gospel ; a faithful shepherd ; a vigilant watchman for our souls ; ” but — “ We must have a graduate, a scholar, an orator, a gentleman ” — when this is the state of things, there is much reason for alarm in Zion. Let there be all these things ; no man is the worse for them, and every man is the better for them, and the more he has of them the better, viewed as secondary qualifications ; but for Christ's sake, for the gospel's sake, for our denomination's sake, for the sake of immortal souls, and the salvation of a lost world, let them be viewed but as secondary, while the higher place shall be given to eminent piety, and a love for the great truths which alone bring salvation. It is affecting, and fearfully predictive of what is coming, to see the popularity, in

some instances, of men who are grown wiser than the apostle Paul, as to the themes of their pulpit ministrations, and to hear the eulogiums pronounced on sermons which would have made him weep. Woe, woe, woe, be to us, when at all but a Christless ministry shall be welcome, because it happens to be an eloquent one; when the doctrines of the atonement, justification, regeneration, and grace, shall be set aside as puritanic themes, which do not suit the circumstances or the tastes of this philosophical age!

Let me repeat, and insist a little more at length upon, the fact that it is not doctrine alone that will meet and successfully oppose the infidel spirit of this generation. This alone never has been sufficient to keep out and keep down error, and never will be. This, at most, will be but as the corpse and the panoply of the strong man armed, set up for the protection of the spiritual house; what is wanted in addition is the living soul, to supply the courage, the energy, and the potency, necessary for the defence. Infidelity will not run away in terror from the lifeless skeletons of our theological systems. In addition to what has been said of Germany and Switzerland, it may be said that all the dissenting churches in this country had the Assembly's Catechism, and yet how many of them lapsed into Arianism, and then into Socinianism! How was this? Just because there was doctrine, but no life. Persons were admitted to fellowship upon a profession of doctrine, without giving evidence that their doctrines had become the principle of spiritual life. The doctrine will not always preserve life, but life will always preserve doctrine. When religion is resolved into the reception of certain dogmas apart from their vital influence; and when this oneness of mere sentiment, rather than a principle of spiritual life, a sympathy of heart, and a congeniality of soul, are made the basis and ground of fellowship, the church must be weak, and in no state to meet the attacks that are made upon it; and, indeed, is very likely soon to give up a creed, which, having lost its chief purpose in renewing, sanctifying, and comforting the soul, has ceased to be of any value, and therefore of any importance. It is when the members all

grow into Christ by a living faith, and into each other by love, that the body is strong, both for defending itself, and carrying on aggressions upon the world. What is wanted for all times, but especially for this, is the union of the *contemplative* with the *active* life. Every age, almost, has its characteristic vices and defects. "The Ascetics and the Mystics went off into one extreme; they sought in retirement, in a contemplative abstraction, and in seraphic raptures, a high degree of holiness and joy. Their contest was, not with sinful appetites, only with innocent ones; their following Christ was not in the rough and arduous pains of outward service, but in the concentration of powerful and pathetic meditations upon his cross and passion. The arena of their conflict was wholly within; and a great part of the struggle consisted in resisting the languor of over-done attention, arresting the vagrancy of volatile thoughts, and rousing the ardor of feelings which had expended themselves by their very intensity." Our danger and defect lie in an opposite extreme. In this age of external activity, we want, could we but command it, more time, and more inclination to cultivate the hidden life, to strengthen its principle, and to allow its development in all its beautiful and appropriate exercises of spirituality of feeling, heavenly-mindedness, and communion with God. The spiritual life with us is low and feeble, and for want of retirement, reading the Scriptures, meditation, prayer, and rigid mortification, is not in a state to resist the attacks that may be made upon our faith. It is the energy of the heart, which, in the human frame, nerves the arm to defend the head; so is it in the spiritual system. D'Aubigné, in the volume to which I have already so frequently alluded, furnishes, by a recital of his own religious experience, a beautiful proof and illustration of this.

After his conversion to God, and after he had begun to preach Christ with fulness of faith, he was so assailed and perplexed, in coming into Germany, by the sophisms of rationalism, that he was plunged into unutterable distress, and passed whole nights without sleeping, crying to God from the bottom of his heart, or endeavoring, by his arguments and syllogisms without end, to repel

the attacks of the adversary. In his perplexity he visited Kleuker, a venerable divine at Kiel, who for forty years had been defending Christianity against the attacks of infidel theologians. Before this admirable man D'Aubigné laid his doubts and difficulties for solution; instead of doing this, Kleuker replied, — "Were I to succeed in ridding you of them, others would soon rise up. There is a shorter, deeper, and more complete way of annihilating them. Let Christ be really to you the Son of God, the Saviour, the Author of eternal life. Only be firmly settled in his grace, and then these difficulties of detail will never stop you; the light which proceeds from Christ will disperse all darkness." This advice, followed as it was by a study with a pious fellow-traveller at an inn at Kiel, of Paul's expression, "Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," relieved him of all his difficulties. After reading together this passage, they prayed over it. — "When I arose," says this illustrious man, "in that room at Kiel, I felt as if my wings were renewed as the wings of eagles. From that time forward I comprehended that my own syllogisms and efforts were of no avail; that Christ was able to do all by his power that worketh in us; and the habitual attitude of my soul was to be at the foot of the cross, crying to him, — 'Here am I, bound hand and foot, unable to move, unable to do the least thing to get away from the enemy who oppresses me. Do all thyself. I know that thou wilt do it, thou wilt even do exceeding abundantly above all that I ask.' I was not disappointed. All my doubts were soon dispelled, and not only was I delivered from that inward anguish which in the end would have destroyed me, had not God been faithful, but the Lord extended unto me peace like a river. If I relate these things, it is not as my own history — not the history of myself alone — but of many pious young men, who, in Germany, and even elsewhere, have been assailed by the raging waves of rationalism. Many, alas! have made shipwreck of their faith, and some have even violently put an end to their lives."

This interesting narrative is a most instructive one, as

teaching that the defence of the Christian, and therefore of the church — the establishment of the individual member, and of the whole of the church in the truth, depends more upon faith than upon reason, and is to be sought rather in the grace of the heart, than in the strength of the intellect — and that therefore to become feeble in piety is to let down our defences, and to expose ourselves to the enemy. He who is “strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man,” and who is “rooted and grounded in love,” though less skilful in argument, is in a far better condition to resist the subtleties of false doctrine, than he who is stronger in argument, but weaker in faith. The hidden life within him is vigorous; and rich in the enjoyment of divine love, *he* is strong in the Lord, and the power of his might: and though the strength of the human intellect, the chain of sound reasoning, and the conclusions of a just logic, when employed in elaborate defences of our faith, are of inestimable worth; yet, after all, it is to the blessing of God on the internal vigor of her own piety, that the church is indebted for her stability, more than to these outworks, which are cast up, from time to time, by her ablest defenders.

VI. I now mention, as another inducement to seek an earnest religion, the circumstances of the age, viewed in connection with the spread of Christianity and as bearing upon the moral interests of the world. The church was never called to a greater work than she is at this moment, nor was the call of Providence upon her ever more loud, earnest, or unequivocal. There is no possibility of mistaking it, and there ought to be neither hesitation, delay, nor negligence, in obeying it. That work is the conversion of the world; and for which all possible facilities in the way of means, instruments, and appliances, have been, and are still being, collected. Let us look at the sphere of operation opened to us — let us survey the territory that is added to our foreign empire — there is nearly all Hindostan, with its hundred and fifty millions of inhabitants, nearly every portion of which is accessible to our Christian influence — then there are Burmah, Siam, Cochin China, all beginning to receive missionaries

—next come our colonies in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Van Dieman's Land, and the Cape of Good Hope. What a scope here for the energies and influence of the church — what a sphere to occupy and fill with our missionaries, our Bibles, and our churches! Let us dwell upon that most marvellous and glorious achievement of modern times, the opening into China by five doors, which no power but that of Omnipotence can ever close, and through which our religion may pass to the teeming millions of that vast hive of human beings. We may mention Madagascar, closed against us at present, but which, at the death of the present queen, and who, for aught we can tell, may die the next hour, or may be dead while this is being penned, will be thrown wide open to our holy enterprise. Can we forget Polynesia, yielding up itself, with its hundreds of islands, to the influence of the gospel?

Next, let us consider the means of rapid and safe communication opened to those distant spheres of our holy activity by steam navigation, and to the interior of the countries by railways; so that oceans seem to be bridged over, and the extremities of continents to be brought near to each other. We may add to this that most surprising of all modern inventions, the electric telegraph, by which intelligence, as upon the lightning's wing, might be conveyed in a few seconds, could the wires reach as far, round the circumference of the globe. Nor is this all, for we cannot but know how the arts have multiplied and cheapened all the means and instruments of the church's work; how chemistry, by its various appliances, has reduced the price of paper — how mechanics, by means of stereotype and the steam press, have lowered the cost of printing, till a bound copy of the whole Scriptures can be purchased for ten pence. Nor does the work of Providence stop here. What a marvellous progress has been made of late years in those researches which lie more remote from popular notice, and in their importance are less obvious to popular comprehension, but which have still a close connection with the spread of Christianity in the world — I mean the discoveries which have been made by learned and exploring minds concern-

ing the origin, affinity, and ancestry, of nations, their language, their customs, their religion, and their traditions! The hieroglyphics of Egypt have at length confessed their secrets, hidden from the ages and generations that are past; while from its pictured tombs its history has obtained a resurrection, confirmatory, in various ways, of the truth of Old Testament history. The cuniform inscriptions of Perseopolis, like the mystic characters in the temples on the Nile, are beginning to be understood and deciphered. The analogies of the various systems of idolatry are being traced and exhibited. There are inquisitive and profoundly learned men, who, amidst the shadows of the Pyramids — in the circles of the Druids — or before the massive rock temples of Irán, “are thinking of the way, and showing it too, in which, from the very first, man has been dealing with and corrupting the majesty of religion, and with him who of that religion is the Author and the Object. Every flame, every hieroglyphic, every ancient sculpture, and every curious legend, suggests some glorious truth, which man has labored to improve by his own imaginations, but which is buried in the lie which man hath made.” Yes, but from that grave, dug by the hand of falsehood, shall those glorious truths arise, and be shown by missionaries competent to the work, to the people who, in their own superstitions, have had the sepulchres of truth.

Now let all this accumulation of means and instruments be taken into account, in their number, variety, and adaptation, and we shall certainly and impressively see what advantages we possess for doing a great work for God upon earth.

It is not, however, simply in this light that I view these matters; that is, as furnishing the opportunity for labor, but as being a loud and impressive call from God to embrace it. Under whose administration has all this been done, and for what purpose has he done it, within so short a space of time? These questions are answered by the apostle where he says, “HE IS HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO HIS CHURCH.” Yes — science and the arts — commerce and war — philosophy and literature, are

his pioneers for levelling mountains, filling up valleys, and preparing the way of the Lord in the desert, that his glory may be revealed, and all flesh see it together. The engineers, and the craftsmen, and the literati, have had other objects in view; but who can for a moment doubt that he who raised up Cyrus of old to set free his people, has prepared these instruments to subserve his own purpose of civilizing and evangelizing all nations? From every part of the world, and from every scene of human activity — from India and China, from the islands of the South Sea, and from the continent of Africa, from the colonies, and the West Indies — the sound is heard pealing over the land, “I the Lord have given you power and wealth — empire and dominion — ships, colonies, and commerce; and have added to all this, steam navigation and railways, stereotype and printing by steam; for this also cometh from the Lord, who teacheth man discretion, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. And now, by all these things, glorify me, and set up my kingdom in the world.” Providence was never more conspicuous in its operations, nor more intelligible and unmistakable in its intentions, than at the present moment. A preparation is going on for some great moral revolution of our world; against which infidelity, popery, and false philosophy, are arraying themselves in an opposition fierce and determined. The forces on both sides are still moving to the conflict already begun, and raging in the valley of decision. To be negligent, dilatory, and indolent now; to hang back and give up ourselves to personal ease and enjoyment now, is to bring upon ourselves the ancient denunciation upon a Jewish city, of whom Jehovah said, in righteous indignation, “Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

But for such a work what qualifications of an intense and earnest religion are indispensable! The work without this may go on; yet it will go on but slowly. It is not enough for Christians, in common with their fellow-citizens, to stand and wonder at the progress of events, and compliment themselves on being born in an

age of deep interest and importance ; they must see in all these events so many incentives to a fervent piety as indicating the intentions and sounding forth the call of Providence ; and as presenting to them the great object, which, amidst all their schemes and activities, must be recognized and pursued as the end of their existence.

VII. THE POLITICAL ASPECT OF THE TIMES supplies another motive to the church, for an earnest and intelligent piety. I am now writing amidst the unlooked for and stupendous events which have occurred in France within the last few weeks ; and which, as by an electric shock, have so rapidly extended their influence over the whole continent. In these tremendous convulsions, we recognize the continuous throes of the fearful earthquake which more than half a century ago convulsed all Europe to its centre ; and we behold, after a temporary lull, the continuance of the hurricane, which in its progress subverted so many thrones, and devastated so many nations. As then, so now, the friends of liberty are exulting in the prospects which are opening before the world. We are forcibly reminded of the eloquent language of Mr. Hall, in surveying the first revolution in France. “ An attention to the political aspect of the world is not now the fruit of an idle curiosity, or the amusement of a dissipated and frivolous mind, but is awakened and kept alive by occurrences as various as they are extraordinary. There are times when the moral world seems to stand still ; there are others when it is impelled towards its goal with an accelerated force. The present is a period more interesting, perhaps, than any which has been known in the whole flight of time. The scenes of Providence thicken upon us so fast, and are shifted with so strange a rapidity, as if the great drama of the world were drawing to a close. Events have taken place, and revolutions have been effected, which, had they been foretold a very few years [weeks] ago, would have been viewed as visionary and extravagant, and their influence is far from being spent. Europe never presented such a spectacle before, and it is worthy of

being contemplated with the profoundest attention by all its inhabitants. The empire of darkness and of despotism has been smitten with a stroke that has sounded through the universe. When we see whole kingdoms, after reposing for centuries on the lap of their rulers, start from their slumber, the dignity of man rising up from depression, and tyrants trembling on their thrones, who can remain entirely indifferent, or fail to turn his eyes to a theatre so august and extraordinary? These are a kind of throes and struggles of nature to which it would be a sullenness to refuse our sympathy. Old foundations are breaking up; new edifices are rearing. Prospects are opening on every side, of such amazing variety and extent, as to stretch further than the eye of the most enlightened observer can reach." Alas, for the vicissitudes of earthly affairs, and the vanity of human hopes! These jubilant and exulting strains, penned in the year 1791, were soon succeeded by the following still more eloquent passage by the same writer, and in reference to the same events. "It had been the constant boast of infidels, that their system, more liberal and generous than Christianity, needed but to be tried to produce an immense accession to human happiness; and Christian nations, careless and supine, retaining little of Christianity but the profession, and disgusted with its restraints, lent a favorable ear to their pretension. God permitted the trial to be made. In one country, and that the centre of Christendom, revelation underwent a total eclipse, while atheism, performing on a darkened theatre its strange and fearful tragedy, confounded the first elements of society, blended every age, rank, and sex, in indiscriminate proscription and massacre, and convulsed all Europe to its centre; that the imperishable memorial of these events might lead the last generations of mankind to consider religion as the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions, and to secure to every one his rights; to the laborious the reward of their industry, to the rich the enjoyment of their wealth, to the nobles the preser-

vation of their honors, and to princes the stability of their thrones.”

The contrast presented in these two splendid passages, between the expected and the real results of the *first* revolution in France, together with the disappointment experienced in the consequences of the *second*, should impose some caution in the anticipation of the effects of the *third*. A nation so slow to learn by the two previous visitations, affords but a feeble hope that it will profit much by the third opportunity of improvement which is now granted it. When it is considered that France is shared between a revived Popery and a rampant infidelity — that there is a deplorable destitution of moral principle pervading all ranks — and that its political crimes against Algeria, Tahiti, and Spain, cry aloud to God for vengeance — and when to this it is added that its present situation is that of the most complete ochlocracy ever exhibited in a civilized country, there is reason to apprehend that what we have yet witnessed may prove only the prologue of the repetition of the awful drama again to be performed in that irreligious land.

Let passing events issue as they may, either in the dreadful struggles of another war, or in the quiet extension of political freedom, there is a high and sacred duty resulting to the church of God from the present posture of affairs. Our obligations are obvious and imperative. It is ours to survey the progress of the storm, not merely with the feverish excitement, and fluctuating hopes, of the mere politician, but with the serene confidence of the Christian. We must remember that Jesus Christ is “head over all things to his church,” and feel assured that the rise and fall of empires are subservient to the accomplishment of his purposes. It is not merely the extension of liberty, however valuable and important that may be, but religion, that must be in our hopes. Our prayers should be continually ascending to God, for the subjugation of all these changes to the wider establishment of that kingdom which cannot be moved. Special meetings for prayer ought to be held with reference to these events.

How important is it, that whether the nations are to be scourged by war, or blessed with liberty and peace, they should have their attention drawn to the church, as, by her eminent piety, the seat of repose, and the circle of bliss! In what an attractive form, at once lovely and awful, should she appear to the children of men, struggling and wearying themselves in seeking after that happiness in political reforms which religion only can supply! Perhaps new openings are about to be made for the evangelization of the continent of Europe. Popery has little to hope, and everything to fear, from the transactions which are going on in Italy, in France, and in Germany. The prospects of the Jesuits become more and more gloomy. The stability of the Papacy itself is coming into jeopardy. The very seat of the Beast totters. On the other hand, infidelity is becoming emboldened, even to audacity, by these changes; and there is no doubt that it has had some hand in bringing them about, for infidels have been often God's pioneers. Christians, rarely has Providence addressed you with a voice more impressive than that by which it now speaks to you. It is possible that every obstruction in the way of spreading the gospel on the Continent may be about to be removed, by the proclamation of freedom of conscience, and the liberty of the press. You, therefore, should be preparing yourselves by a fresh baptism of the Spirit for your high vocation. Rise, O, rise above the region of politics, into that of religion! Connect with all that is going on, the idea of a grand development of God's plan of mercy for our apostate world. Feel as if you must, *for* and by these things, be men of stronger faith and more fervent prayer. Let it be a conviction deeply rooted in the mind of every one of you, that there needs for such an age, and amidst such revolutions, a new and grander exhibition of the excellence of religion, and the power of the church. By the depth of your own convictions, and the intensity of your own hopes, that all now going on is but a preparatory process to usher in an evangelical era of European history, labor to communicate this idea, and to awaken this expectation in the public mind. Endeavor to make all men

feel, that for the world's happiness, there is something better than even liberty to be obtained, and without which, freedom itself cannot be fully enjoyed, nor permanently secured. Let the church be seen as a lighthouse to guide the nations of the earth into the haven of safety and peace.

CHAPTER IX.

EXAMPLES OF EARNESTNESS.

EARNESTNESS means intensity of feeling leading on to vigorous and determined action; and what is so likely to produce this as example? Principles instruct us — precepts guide us — but example moves us. Example is principle and precept embodied, living, and in action. We see not only what is done, and what ought to be done, but what *can* be done, and how it is done. It appeals to all our faculties at once; it fixes the attention — engages the imagination — instructs the judgment — moves the heart — subdues the will — awakens the conscience — and assists the memory. Its motive power is astonishing. Let us, therefore, look at the examples of earnestness for the people, as in a former volume we have selected some for the ministry.

Were it not undesirable to swell out this volume to an undue extent, it would be well to bring forward some examples of earnestness in the cause of evil, that Christians, by this means, might be stirred up to more full devotedness in the service of God. What intense activity has ever been exhibited by the worshippers of idols, as proved by the facts of history and the records of Scripture Isaiah xlv.; Jeremiah vii. 17; l. 38. Are Mahometans usually lacking in zeal for their religion, or lukewarm in professing or diffusing it? What shall we say of Popery, which has breathed such an inspiration into its votaries that every man becomes a zealot as soon as he is a papist?

How is it, then, that these votaries of a false religion are more in earnest than so many of the followers of the true one?

If we look at the followers after wealth, science, fame, how much do we see that confirms the truth of our Lord's words, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Happily, however, for the honor of a pure Christianity, we may see among its professors instances of devotedness, not to be surpassed in any other classes or communities on the face of the earth. If we turn to the scenes which followed the day of Pentecost, as described by the historian of "The Acts of the Apostles," chap. ii. 41, 49, we shall find something more lovely than was ever exhibited in our world. Then let us think of the martyr-age, when the Christians went in crowds to the scaffold, the stake, and the lions of the amphitheatre. Following on the bloody track of persecution, we may turn our eyes to the Alpine heights of Piedmont, whither the Waldenses retreated from the fury of the Papal Beast. Or if in modern times we would look for instances of earnestness, we may find them in the zeal of "The United Brethren," or Moravians, as they are called, who, when their whole society amounted only to six hundred poor, despised exiles, sent out missions, in the short space of nine years, to Greenland, St. Thomas', St. Croix, Surinam, the Rio de Berbice, the Indians of North America, the Negroes of South Carolina, Lapland, Tartary, Algiers, Guinea, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Island of Ceylon.

But as individual instances will have more power than a reference to collective bodies, we will now look at some of these. Have we forgotten JOHN HOWARD, the philanthropist, who, under the influence of Christian philanthropy — for he *was* a Christian in the spiritual sense of the term — left his elegant retreat in Bedfordshire, to traverse the length and breadth of Europe, and spend his life in "diving into the depths of dungeons, and plunging into the infection of hospitals, to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain, and to take the gauge of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten, to attend

to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and to collate and compare the distresses of men of all ages."

But perhaps examples bearing more directly upon efforts for the spread of religion will be thought most appropriate, and I proceed, therefore, to exhibit some few of these.

I hold up, then, for the imitation of men of wealth, two individuals, worthy to be associated on the same page, and deserving of everlasting remembrance by the church of God. The first is the eminent JOHN THORNTON, Esq., of Clapham, a name never to be mentioned, but with reverent affection. This gentleman was a London merchant and who by the high moral principle which guided all his secular pursuits, and the munificent distribution of his large profits, was one of those who inscribe upon their merchandise, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." He was, by profession, a member of the Church of England; but neither his piety, nor his charity, nor his liberality, could be bound up within the limits of any one section of the Christian church. His heart was too large to be confined with any amplitude of narrower dimensions than the universal church. So that the cause of evangelical religion could be promoted, he scarcely asked the question whether it was done by churchman or dissenter; his heart, his lip, his purse, were opened to all alike. Aware that the preaching of the gospel is God's great instrument for the conversion of sinners, he was zealous for the education of pious young men for the work of the Christian ministry, and from his own purse was mainly instrumental in establishing, and for a while supporting, the Dissenting Academy at Newport Pagnell, then under the care of the Rev. T. Bull. What a noble effort of piety and charity for a churchman! In this labor of love he was assisted by his friend, the Rev. John Newton, of St. Mary, Woolnoth. In pursuance of the same object, he purchased church livings, to bestow them upon men who preached the pure gospel; and was ever ready to contribute large sums, or smaller, as the case might require, for the erection or enlargement of churches in the establishment, or chapels among dissenters. He scarcely ever turned away a well accredited case. Often while he was

transacting business with captains or with merchants, in his own counting-house, applicants for his bounty would be waiting for their turn of audience in the outer one; and the latter were made as welcome to take away his wealth, as the former were to bring it in, and would be received with a smile as cordial. In his ships large numbers of Bibles and good books were often sent with his merchandise to the distant nations of the earth.

In subserviency to religion, and from the most enlarged and expanded philanthropy, Mr. Thornton liberally patronized every undertaking which was intended to relieve the distress, or increase the comfort, of the human species; so that it would have been difficult to mention one private or public charity of his day, to which he was not a benefactor. To support such numerous and expensive designs of usefulness, without embarrassing his affairs, or interfering with the real interests of his family, he avoided all extravagance in his domestic establishments, and acted upon the principle that frugality is the best purveyor for liberality. He spent little upon himself, in order that he might have the more to spend for God and his fellow-creatures. Nor was it only his wealth that he thus devoted, though the sums he spent must have been immense, but he gave also his time and his labor. He lived to do good; he pursued it as a business, and he enjoyed it as a pleasure. He was as earnest in giving, as most men are in getting. Such was the good, of the eminent John Thornton, the Christian philanthropist of Clapham.

THOMAS WILSON, Esq.,* of Highbury, whose memory will ever be fondly cherished, as long as liberality in the cause of God shall be esteemed a virtue, set out in life as a Christian tradesman. He was partner in a respectable and lucrative establishment in the silk line, in London. This, when bright prospects of worldly advantage were

* This eminent individual, and also Lady Huntingdon, were mentioned in "The Earnest Ministry;" but they are brought forward here, and at greater length, as belonging more to this volume than to that; and had the present work been contemplated when the former one was written, they would have been reserved for this occasion.

opening before him, he quitted early in manhood, to devote himself wholly to the cause of God, and the spiritual welfare of his fellow-creatures. It may be justly questioned, whether it would not be better, in most cases, for pious and wealthy tradesmen to remain, like Mr. Thornton, in business, and consecrate their profits to Christ, than retire from it. This would augment their means of usefulness by the acquisition of greater wealth, and by the influence they exert over other men engaged in trade. Occasionally, however, it is well for an individual, as in the present case, to give up altogether secular pursuits, and yield *himself*, as well as his property, to God. The *time* and attention of one such man, as well as the property of many other men combined, is needed for the benefit of our institutions. Mr. Wilson's excellent father had been treasurer of the Dissenting College at Hoxton, for the education of ministers, which has been since removed to Highbury. To that office he succeeded at the death of his father, and in which he has been followed by his son, Joshua Wilson, Esq. From the time of his official connection with this important institution, he became, in the best sense of the term, a public man. To his patrimonial inheritance, which was handsome, though not, in the widest meaning of the expression, affluent, he had a large accession by the death of a maternal uncle; which afforded him an opportunity, had he chosen to embrace it, to add much to the splendor of his style of living. *He* preferred rather to consider it as furnishing him with fresh means for glorifying God, in promoting his cause.

Mr. Wilson was one of the fathers and founders of the London Missionary Society, and at the time of his decease was its treasurer. He was a liberal patron of all the religious societies of the day. But the object of his chief attention, care, and solicitude, was the college; and in the cause of this, and what stood connected with it, he embarked his time, his influence, his bodily labor, and to a considerable extent, his fortune. To fill the college with students—to help to support many of them during their academic course—to provide churches for them to settle with—and, where necessary, to build chapels for

them to preach in, formed the noble object of his existence. To carry out this end, he had his office, his clerk, and his correspondence; to which he devoted himself with the same assiduity as did the merchants around to their commerce and their gains. In one sense, his office yielded the advantage of a registration for ministers that wanted churches, and churches that wanted pastors; and his private residence, also, was ever accessible to all who had any communication to make, or wished his counsel. What multitudes have been his guests, and have shared his unostentatious, but generous hospitalities!

Touched with the destitution of the metropolis, as regards adequate evangelical means of instruction, he erected at his own risk, and mainly at his own cost, four spacious chapels — Hoxton, Paddington, Craven, and Claremont. Nor was his munificence confined to London, for he built new and elegant places of worship at Ipswich, Northampton, Richmond, Dover. Besides this, he contributed in sums from five hundred pounds to fifty, to the enlargement and erection of eighty other chapels, and in smaller amounts to hundreds more. He could have spent little less than fifty or sixty thousand pounds in the service of his Lord. It was not, however, the amount of money that constituted the whole of his earnestness, but the surrender of all he was, and all he had, to the work of God. He lived for these two objects — to educate ministers, and to build chapels. At home and abroad — by correspondence and personal inspection — by receiving information and seeking it, he was ever laboring to carry out this design. Age did not paralyze the ardor of this devoted and unwearied man, nor dismiss him from his beloved employ. When too feeble to go to his office in town, its business was brought to him at his own habitation. The last interview I had with him, which was not long before his decease, when, though attenuated by disease and suffering from pain, his countenance brightened up, as he showed me a letter which he had just received from a minister encouraging his hopes that his correspondent would settle at one of the chapels he had erected in the metropolis.

On reading this brief account, no one can doubt, much

less any *one* who knew the subject of it, that Mr Wilson was a fine specimen of an earnest man. Let men of fortune contemplate this bright example, and go and do likewise. Let them here learn the real design of Providence in bestowing wealth, and their own richest enjoyment in appropriating it. What a service does that man render to the cause of religion through all time, and the souls of his fellow-creatures through all eternity, who erects only *one* place of worship, or educates only *one* minister for the preaching of the gospel !

Men of leisure and of literature will find an admirable example of intense activity and continued labor, in the cause of public usefulness, in the late GEORGE STOKES, Esq. This gentleman also commenced life as a partner in a large wholesale silk establishment. He had received a good classical education at Merchant Tailor's School in London. While yet comparatively a young man, and much engaged in business, he connected himself with that inestimably valuable institution, the Religious Tract Society, as one of its committee, and placed no divided heart upon its altar. In addition to the ordinary duties of a committee-man, he soon brought his literary taste and acquirements under requisition, for the benefit of the Society, and wrote several tracts, which were adopted, printed, and widely circulated. When the society felt any pressure upon its finances, Mr. Stokes' purse was as much at its command as his pen. At the meetings of the committee, he was always present when not prevented by sickness or absence from home ; and was often in daily attendance at the depository for a long time together. He wrote several of the annual reports, and proceeded with ever increasing zeal and ingenuity to multiply by his own pen the productions issued by the Society. The series of hawker's tracts, and children's books, the Tract Magazine, and the subsequent issue of larger works, owed much to his inventive mind and ever active pen. The stereotype plates for some of the earlier issues of religious books cost him six hundred pounds. In all his labors he was most ably assisted by his invaluable friend, and the Society's incomparable agent, Mr. William Lloyd. His greatest work was his preparation of the Society's Com-

mentary upon the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. In the accomplishment of this he employed five years, and was often engaged eight hours a day upon it. It is needless to say he had long since resigned the active duties of worldly business, to devote himself to his gratuitous, extensive, and unwearied labors, in the cause of the Religious Tract Society. Mr. Stokes died at Cheltenham, on the 31st of May, in his fifty-eighth year; soon after which a resolution of sympathy with his family, of gratitude to God, and admiration of his life and labors, was passed by the Society, of which the following is an extract: "The committee now feel it their duty to record upon their minutes the interesting fact, that Mr. Stokes prepared for the Society about two hundred separate tracts, translations, juvenile and other larger volumes; including, 'The Commentary on the Holy Bible;' 'The Writings and Lives of the British Reformers;' 'The English History;' and various works on 'The Manners and Customs of the Jews;' and that in addition to all these important publications, he zealously and disinterestedly discharged, for twenty-two years, the duties of one of the editors of the Tract Magazine and the Child's Companion."

Of these various publications nearly fourteen million copies have been issued by the Society. Well might Mr. Jones, the admirable travelling agent of the Society, in his "Recollections of the late George Stokes, Esq.," remark, we learn here "*the power of a single individual to do much good.* Mr. Stokes was a man of useful, rather than of splendid, talents. He was not a literary miser. He collected knowledge that he might freely impart it. His light was not put under a bushel, but was seen of men, and gave light to those around. He lived not to himself. Without being fully conscious of it, he so shone before men, through his numerous and useful works, that many were led to glorify his heavenly Father."

I now bring forward two instances from humble life, for the instruction and encouragement of those in a similar situation. The first is THOMAS CRANFIELD, of whom an interesting memoir has been published by the Re-

ligious Tract Society, under the title of "The Useful Christian." Thomas Cranfield was the son of a journeyman baker in Southwark, and as he grew up to youth, became a wicked, cruel and brutish lad. He absconded from his master, enlisted into the army, and was at the siege of Gibraltar. He was a brave soldier, and reckless of danger, but a slave of sin and Satan. On his return to England, he was taken to hear Mr. Romaine preach at Blackfriars. His hard heart was broken down by the hammer of the Word, and his pious parents soon had the ineffable felicity to see their soldier-son enter, heart and soul, into the service of the Captain of our salvation. Having found joy and peace in believing, he became intensely anxious and active for the salvation of others. His first solicitude was for his wife, who soon became a fellow-heir with him of the grace of life. He then sought the conversion of her relatives, as his own were already Christians. The next objects of his pious zeal were the lodgers in the house where he resided, two of whom became, by their conversion, the fruits of his labors. Soon after he acted as clerk to an out-of-door preacher, who proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation to the multitude in Moorfields. Then he joined in setting up a prayer-meeting among the brick-makers at Kingsland. At length, panting for a regular means of doing good, rather than these casual efforts, he opened a Sunday school at Rotherhithe, where he had witnessed some awful scenes of juvenile depravity. Finding, at length, some one to conduct this institution, he directed his views to Tottenham, and opened another there. Founding and conducting Sunday schools now became his vocation, to which he surrendered himself with all the ardor with which he had fought his country's battles on the heights of Gibraltar. School after school was opened by him in many of the darkest and rudest places in the neighborhood of the metropolis, of which he was the teacher, the superintendent, and the purveyor, finding friends to assist with their money, and teachers by their labors. To the duties of a superintendent of Sunday schools, he added those of a visitor of the sick, till Thomas Cranfield

became known as a friend of the young, the sick, and the poor, through whole neighborhoods. What he wanted in order and method, he made up in zeal and perseverance. Individual, as well as general, in his attentions, he visited the children at their homes, and wrote letters enough to them to make a volume. He looked after them when they had left the school, followed them to their domiciles, or assembled them at a meeting of "old scholars." At one of these gatherings, amounting to about sixty, it was ascertained that fourteen of those present were members of churches, and that there was scarcely one who did not attend a place of worship. The lodging-houses, those dark domains of Satan, where filth, and ignorance, and vice, seem all condensed together, into their narrowest dimensions, did not escape his notice, or daunt his courage, and he rendered many of them accessible to the light of truth, and the glad tidings of salvation. Thus lived and labored Thomas Cranfield. Time blunted not his religious sensibilities, and he bore fruit to old age—at fourscore he was still lively in desire, though feeble in action, in the cause of his Master. Half a century he had labored as a devoted Sunday school teacher, and tired not to the last. This once profligate youth, and brave but wicked soldier, when he died, was honored with funeral obsequies, which the hero under whom he served at Gibraltar might have coveted in vain to enjoy. O, for more Thomas Cranfields!*

HARLAN PAGE is more than worthy to be associated in these biographical etchings, with the last mentioned individual, for though not superior in piety and devotedness to Thomas Cranfield, he was before him, both in talent and in usefulness. Harlan Page was a native of Connecticut, in the United States. His father was a house-joiner, to which trade he also was brought up. He was converted to God when about twenty-two years of age. "When I first obtained a hope," he said on his dying bed, "I felt that I must labor for souls. I prayed year after year that God would make me the means of saving

* "The Useful Christian," by the Tract Society. 1s.

souls." His prayer was soon answered ; for who ever presented such a prayer, and followed it up with appropriate and diligent exertions, that had not his desires gratified? Three days after he publicly professed his faith in Christ, he began his useful career by addressing a letter to one who had been long resisting conviction and hardening his heart. Letter-writing now became his chosen means of doing good ; and this instrumentality he scarcely ceased, for a single day, to employ. He addressed himself to relations and strangers — to friends and foes — to the rich and the poor — to saints and sinners — to persons in all states and stages of religious experience — and to the young and old — with a diligence that is surprising. No lover of wealth or literature was ever more assiduous in correspondence than was this pious carpenter. When lying on a sick bed, he would employ himself in thinking in what new ways he could be useful ; and when recovered, it was his first solicitude to put his plans and purposes into execution. His next means of saving souls was the printing and circulating of small cards, with a short and impressive address, composed by himself, on some of the momentous truths of revelation. The distribution of tracts was added to the circulation of cards. His object then was to promote prayer-meetings and revivals of religion among his fellow-members. On one occasion he had entered in his private memoranda short notices of seventy-nine individuals under concern, among whom he was ever active in promoting their spiritual welfare. His pen was as busy as his tongue, and he was always preparing addresses for publication in some of the religious periodicals ; and which were full of point, pathos, and unction. " While working at three shillings a day, here was a mechanic performing his daily task on hire, establishing and sustaining a religious meeting at the boarding-house, on Wednesday evenings ; a meeting of the people of God, for prayer, on Sabbath mornings, at sun-rise ; and though he went three miles to attend public worship, throwing his efforts into a Sabbath school at five, p. m. ; devoting Sabbath evenings to meetings and family visitation ; conversing with the sick, the careless, the anxious ; dis-

tributing tracts ; endeavoring to awaken an interest in the religious operations of the day ; keeping a brief diary ; abounding in prayer ; and adopting, with others, an incipient measure for the formation of a church and the settlement of a pastor."

At length, Harlan Page was appointed Agent of the General Depository of the American Tract Society, which opened to him a new sphere of activity and usefulness, and which he filled with his accustomed energy. He assembled, from time to time, all the tract distributors, companies of Sunday school teachers, and others, to instruct them, as a kind of drill sergeant in the army of the Captain of Salvation, in their several duties. The great temperance movement received his hearty coöperation. During all these labors for others, he was no less assiduous for his own family, and had the joy of seeing his children walking in the truth. It may be truly said he was animated by as much as is ever found in imperfect humanity, of the passion for saving souls ; and for this he would have been willing to become a martyr.

Yea, in some sense he was a martyr, for his constant labors wore out a frame, never robust ; and after having saved by his varied instrumentality more souls than most of those who bear the ministerial office, he died, at the comparatively early age of forty-two ; and has left an example of earnestness in doing good, which were the church of Christ disposed to imitate, our world would soon be rescued from the dominion of sin and Satan, and recovered to its rightful owner, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us hear this dying saint say, "I know it is all of God's grace, and nothing that I have done ; but I think that I have had evidence that *more than one hundred souls have been converted to God through my own direct and personal instrumentality ;*" —and having heard it, let us consider what one man in humble life, with by no means a strong bodily frame, but with a heart burning with an ardent desire to be useful to men's souls, can do, when he is given up to this blessed and sublime occupation. Suppose every Christian congregation were blessed with ten such individuals, yea five, yea one, what a shower of blessings might be expected to fall upon the neighborhood

in which they live! Here is earnestness indeed. It would not be easy to think of a means more likely to rouse Christians to a sense of their capacity and obligations for doing good, than the perusal of the cheap memoirs of this wonderful man, which also has been republished in this country by the Religious Tract Society.

We will now contemplate two or three examples of female earnestness, which are selected for that sex which has ever distinguished itself for zeal in every good cause, and especially in that of religion. In the time of the Saviour they were his most constant and devoted followers, were last at the cross, and first at the sepulchre; and since then, have in every age shown the ardor of their love by distinguished services.

The first instance is selected from the peerage, and is the well known Selina, COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON. This extraordinary woman was from a child of a grave and serious disposition, and maintained, amidst all the elegance and gayety of Donnington Park, a devout turn of mind. She was, however, for a long time laboring hard to establish her own righteousness; till by conversation with Lady Margaret Hastings, a near relative on her husband's side, she received the knowledge of justification by faith. Whitfield and Wesley were then in the midst of their labors, and the zenith of their popularity and usefulness. Lord and Lady Huntingdon immediately patronized the new doctrine, and were the followers of Whitfield wherever he preached. Connected by her rank with nobility, and by her habits with literary men, wits, poets, and statesmen, what decision, fortitude, and even heroism, it required, not stealthily and by night, but boldly in the face of day, to connect herself with the sect everywhere spoken ill of, and ridiculed as a band of ignorant fanatics! Such qualities were possessed by the subject of this sketch. She became to a certain extent the patroness of the despised preacher at "the Foundry." Her saloon was thrown open to his preaching, where Lord Chesterfield, the high priest of the god of fashion, Lord Bolingbroke, and many other peers and peeresses, would not unfrequently be found, at her ladyship's solici-

tation, listening to Whitfield, now appointed to be her chaplain. It was while this great man was on a visit to Lady Huntingdon's seat, at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, that the Tabernacle, in London, was planned, and chiefly at her instigation. By this time, her fortune, never very large, and her influence, which was much greater, were both put in requisition to meet the expense of the erection of the Tabernacle, Tottenham Court chapel, and other places of worship. Mr. Berridge, of Everton, Mr. Rowland Hill, Mr. Matthew Wilks, and all others of their style of preaching, whether in or out of the Church of England, became her protegés. She was still professedly a member of that communion, but loved the gospel, and all who preached it, infinitely more than she did the church. Lay preaching, and out of door preaching, met with her entire concurrence and liberal support. Chapels now were engaged by her wherever she could obtain them, to the full extent of her means; and it was her special delight to buy theatres, when they were to be obtained, and so turn those places into houses for saving souls, which had been formerly employed for destroying them. Wherever a revival of religion took place, in the establishment, or in any other denomination, her influence was sure to be engaged.

After studding the land with chapels, and supplying them with ministers, supporting them, in many cases, from her own purse, she aimed at nobler game, and established a college, at Trevecca, in South Wales, for the education of ministers; and I have lying before me, at this moment, a list of the names of ministers, and many of them of considerable celebrity, amounting to one hundred and twenty-five, who were educated in this seminary. When the lease of the premises at Trevecca expired, the college was removed to Cheshunt, Herts. where it now continues, under the able presidency of Dr. Harris; and already have nearly two hundred ministers been educated for the preaching of the gospel, in that seat of holy and general literature. A religious connection was formed which bore, and which still bears, the name of this distinguished lady. Her personal exertions in these works of faith, and labors of love, were un-

ounded. She lived for nothing else. Rank, and fortune, and influence, were valuable in her eyes, only as they enabled her to glorify God, advance the kingdom of Christ, and save immortal souls. All she possessed, she consecrated to the Redeemer of the world, and his cause on earth. She kept no state, she incurred no expense, in order that she might give all to the Saviour. She was often involved in considerable difficulties for want of money, not, like many of the nobility, to meet her debts for gambling or extravagance, but for buying or erecting chapels. Having determined to erect a place of worship at Brighton, and being at the time rather straitened for money, she came to the noble resolution of selling her jewels, and with the produce, amounting to nearly seven hundred pounds, she built the chapel in North Street, in that town, now occupied by the Rev. Joseph Sortain. This was one of the most interesting sacrifices of vanity ever made at the shrine of religion. How truly may it be said of that place of Christian worship, with an alteration of the future into the past time, "I have laid thy stones with fair colors, and thy foundations with sapphires, and I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones."

Such was Lady Huntingdon. How correctly has it been said by her biographer, "The value of such a life can never be ascertained, till the heavens and the earth be no more; and when temporal happiness and misery shall have vanished like the illusion of a dream, thousands, and tens of thousands, will be thankful that she lived so long, the faithful servant of God, and the happy instrument of their conversion."

Here was earnestness indeed!

But few have such opportunities for service in the cause of Christ as this illustrious woman, and we therefore descend to others nearer the ordinary level of human life. From these we select that noble-minded woman, Mrs. FRY. This lady, as is well known, was a member of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, as they are commonly called. After spending her youth in worldliness, vanity, and with an inclination to scepticism, yet still

amidst many struggles with a conscience which urged her to higher pursuits, she was converted to God by the preaching and conversation of William Savory, an American Quaker minister, who visited this land on a religious mission. Little did this holy and self-denying servant of the Lord imagine, when he set his foot on the shores of Britain, what a convert he was about to win to the cross of his Master. Had he lived only for that one object, his existence would have been a rich blessing to our world. Mrs. Fry's piety, from the commencement of her religious life, partook of the ardor of her natural temperament. In addition to the contemplative duties of religion, she soon added the assiduities of an active benevolence, and when surrounded by the cares of married life, and the anxieties of a mother with an increasing family, and a feeble constitution, she, notwithstanding, devoted much time to visiting the poor. She grew in grace amidst some bodily suffering, and became eminent for the power of the hidden life. She was soon appointed visiter of the school and work-house of the Society of Friends, at Islington, upon the duties of which, notwithstanding her multiplying cares at home, she entered with alacrity, humility, and self-devotedness. Her active mind soon after this became anxious to form an establishment for the welfare of female servants. That mysterious, interesting, but degraded race, the Gypsies, did not escape her notice, and she visited their little camp as often as it was pitched in her neighborhood; relieving their wants, reproving their sins, and furnishing such as could read with books. After speaking occasionally in their meetings, the Friends acknowledged her ministry as one whom the Lord had called. This devolved upon her new duties and frequent journeys.

At length the attention of Mrs. Fry was called to the female prisoners in Newgate, who at that time were in the most deplorable condition, both physically and morally. Hundreds of these wretched beings were huddled together, in filth, vice, and confusion; and often infuriated to madness with ardent spirits, which were then allowed to be sold in the prison, till the place resembled a pandemonium. She was now the mother of eight children, and *can she*

with such a charge find leisure, and for such an object find *courage*, to venture into that den of revolting and outrageous wickedness? Or could she hope even by her calm and gentle presence to control that band of furies? Against the remonstrances of some, the fears of more, and the despondency of nearly all but her own heaven-moved mind, this angel of mercy descended into that dark domain of vice, which had acquired the designation of "hell above ground." Her presence so benign, her voice so musical, her disposition so affectionate, and her whole manner so gentle and yet so confiding, awed the rude spirits which collected around her. Such a form of sanctity and mercy had never before been seen in that abode of vice and misery; and an immediate impression in her favor was produced upon the minds of the female culprits whom she had gone to instruct. At her instigation, "An Association for the Improvement of the Female Prisoners in Newgate," was formed, of which, of course, she was the chief agent. Their operations were seconded by the civic authorities, and soon evinced that there are no characters so desperate, and no habits of vice so inveterate, which may not be expected to yield to judicious, gentle, firm, and persevering kindness. Mrs. Fry's unwearied labors continued, and with them the reformation at Newgate advanced. But this brought upon her an extensive correspondence, and much additional labor of other kinds, for she had become now a female heroine whose fame had gone out into all the earth; it had penetrated mansions, palaces, and the courts of justice; and drew attention, not only to herself, but, what was still more important, to the subject of prison reform. Her visits were now extended, not only to almost every part of the country, but also to the channel islands. After this, she crossed the Atlantic, and visited America, returning home through France. Scarcely was she quietly and safely at home, before another journey was undertaken to the continent, when she traversed Germany, Holland and Denmark. Thus did this wonderful woman ever go about doing good. No distance, no difficulties, no labors, appalled her, in her efforts to instruct ignorance, to reform vice, and to alleviate wretch-

edness. Advancing years chilled not her ardor, nor induced her to seek repose. In this noble career she continued till the Master whom she so much loved, and so well served, called her to her rest, and her reward. Such was the woman, who in her last illness made this declaration to her daughter, "I can say one thing—since my heart was turned to the Lord, at the age of seventeen, I believe I have never wakened from sleep, in sickness or in health, by day or by night, without my first waking thoughts being, How shall I best serve my Lord?"

Perhaps it will be thought by many that Mrs. Fry's example, though so beautiful, is, like Lady Huntingdon's, too lofty to be approached and imitated, however it may be contemplated and admired, by the readers of this volume. I now, then, exhibit one, altogether worthy to follow Mrs. Fry's, to which no such remark will apply. SARAH MARTIN, of Great Yarmouth, was brought up to the business of a dress-maker, and followed this vocation in her native town. Her mind was brought under the saving influence of religion at the age of nineteen. Like most others, whose conversion to God is real, she no sooner experienced the blessedness of true religion, than she longed to diffuse it. The first impulse of her zeal was a strong desire to visit the workhouse, and read and pray with its inmates. God, who inspires such wishes, will always make way for their gratification; and it was her felicity not only to gain admission to the house, but to receive a hearty welcome, and a patient attention, from its inmates. In the same year, when passing the jail, she felt a strong inclination to be admitted within its gloomy walls and cells, to read the Scriptures to the prisoners. She kept her wishes a secret, lest her friends should interfere, and hinder her in this work of mercy. God led her, and she consulted none but him. Difficulties presented themselves, but they soon vanished before the power of faith, prayer, and perseverance. The governor, aware of her consistent piety and benevolent character, indulged her in her generous plan of benefiting his guilty charge. Her frequent visits soon became habitual ones. Finding, on one occasion,

a female convict, who was soon about to be transported, making a bonnet on the Sabbath, she immediately obtained permission to set up regular Sunday service, which till then had been neglected ; and which from that time was conducted by herself.

To carry out her schemes for the improvement of the prisoners, she now sacrificed one day's profitable labor, to give it to them. A pious lady, aware of this generous sacrifice, bought another day's labor of her for the jail, by allowing her what she usually received for her day's work. Books were wanting for the instruction of the women, and to obtain these she raised a quarterly subscription among a few friends. In connection with these visits to the jail, she carried on, during an hour or two of the day, the instruction of a few boys and girls, and kept up also her unabated attention to the paupers in the workhouse. As the close sick rooms of that asylum of poverty materially injured her health, she was compelled to relinquish this sphere of benevolence, and take up, in lieu of it, a workhouse school. At length, her whole time was redeemed from making ladies' dresses, and given to the blessed work of instructing and reforming the victims of sin and of justice ; for, as may be supposed, her business would naturally and necessarily decline, in consequence of her irregular attention to it. Her support failed with her business, except what she derived from the interest of between two and three hundred pounds. But with strong and unpresumptuous faith, she exclaimed, "The Lord will provide !" And so he did. She had by this time become, quite unintentionally, a public character. The corporation knew, approved, and sanctioned her labors ; and did more than this, for they voted her an allowance from the public funds. Her delicate and generous mind was wounded by the offer, and for a while she pertinaciously refused it, till it was literally forced upon her, by her acceptance of it being made the condition of the continuance of her visits to the jail. This, of course, subdued all opposition. In this career she continued, setting up one institution after another in the jail, for the benefit of its inmates, all tending to instruct their minds, to reform their morals, to promote

their industry, to soften the rigor of their imprisonment, and to prepare them either for their return to society, or for their banishment into a land of exile. Nor did her solicitude leave them when they were discharged from prison, but followed them with its counsels and its vigilance into whatever situation she could trace them. It was her custom to compose addresses, in the form of short sermons, to be read to them at their Sunday worship, and which did honor to head and heart. A few of these are printed at the end of her Memoirs. So efficient were her services in the jail, that most honorable mention of them was made in the report given to Parliament by the Inspector of Prisons. Her influence, which consisted of the meekness of wisdom and the gentleness of love, was unbounded over her guilty and degraded pupils. Men, as well as women, hardened in crime, would, by their attention and kindness to her, yield the spectacle of the lion crouching at the feet of the lamb. In this way did this modest and unassuming young woman pursue her beneficial career, struggling all the while with a feeble frame, till, worn out with the efforts of her self-denying zeal, the operations of which were often carried on amidst vermin, filth, and vice, so abhorrent to her physical and moral sensibilities, she ceased from her labors, and entered that world where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. In prospect of her decease, she composed a funeral sermon for herself, to be read to the prisoners after her death, and a touching and beautiful address it is.

The name of Sarah Martin will never cease to be mentioned with a tribute of esteem, as long as there are hearts to feel, or tongues to express, a high admiration for pure, disinterested, and self-denying benevolence.

Was not this earnestness?*

Let these sketches of character be considered not merely as giving us information, but as furnishing examples — not merely to be admired, but imitated — not merely to lay down a rule, but to give an impulse. We see what others have done, and learn what we ought to

* An interesting memoir of this most excellent woman has been published, price one shilling, by the Religious Tract Society.

do. We may not have their ten talents, but we learn from them how to employ our five or one. Our opportunity may not be so extensive for doing good as theirs, but our desire may be as ardent. The grace that moved them can move us. If we cannot be a Mr. Wilson, we may, perhaps, become a Thomas Cranfield, or a Harlan Page: and if, my female readers, you cannot be a Lady Huntingdon, or a Mrs. Fry, you may perhaps be a Sarah Martin. May we all, by God's grace, drink in an inspiration to do good from looking at these examples!

CHAPTER X.

THE MEANS TO BE USED TO OBTAIN A HIGHER DEGREE OF EARNEST PIETY IN THE CHURCHES.

THIS increased earnestness is a state of things which must not be left to come on of itself, without any efforts of ours, or be carelessly thrown upon the sovereignty of God. If a farm, whose scanty produce scarcely repays its tillage, is known to be susceptible of greater fertility, how is that end to be attained? Not by leaving the ground to itself, or continuing the old system of husbandry, or waiting for more auspicious seasons: there must be better farming, and a more diligent farmer. He who would double his crops, must double his labor. "Up, and be doing," is the voice of both reason and revelation. I would raise, if I could, through the length and breadth of the land, the stimulating cry, "*Something more must be done.*" I do not mean to say nothing is being done. No. Blessed be God, not only something, but *much*, is being done. I would start in a new career of earnestness, with a devout, joyful, and grateful admission of what *is* doing. It is easier to keep up motion than to originate it; and it is easier to keep in action those who have risen up from their repose, and are already moving, than to excite others who are reposing

on the couch of idleness. It is both untrue and lishheartening to affirm that there is no life, no motion, no activity, in the church. In some things there never was more. "Whereunto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule." All good things tend to better things. Past success encourages the hope of achievements yet to be made. Despondency paralyzes exertion; and the shadows of present fears darken the path of the future, and frighten us back when we would advance. Still we are not what we ought to be, what we might be — what we must be.

I. As everything that is done by human instrumentality is the result of reflection, increased earnestness can only arise from increased thoughtfulness; and I therefore now suggest certain topics connected with this subject, for the deep meditation of professing Christians.

Has the church of God ever yet developed fully the divine idea of its own nature, and transcendent excellence and importance, as set forth in the New Testament? Let any one study this holy community as it is *there* described, and then say whether the sublime theory has ever yet been so entirely worked out, as it might have been, and should have been? Whether the unity — the sanctity — the love — the zeal — the heavenliness, of this "pattern given in the mount," have been embodied with sufficient and attainable approach to perfection, in the Christian profession? Whether the true idea of "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," — a body of redeemed and sanctified men — a band of witnesses for God — has not been sunk amidst forms of government, ceremonial observances, and mere nominal Christianity? If we cannot find in all its grandeur this conception of the infinite Intellect in the pages of the ecclesiastical history of past ages, can we find it now? Will any one, on looking upon the schisms which divide, the corruptions which have disfigured, and still do disfigure, and the worldliness which enervates, the church, affirm, that this is according to the archetype in the Word of God? Is it not, then, high time we should begin to think, and think earnestly, of conforming the church more exactly to its divine model? Have we

not all been too much in the habit of considering *the church* as symbolized by systems of ecclesiastical polity and denominational distinctions and designations, rather than as consisting of those who repent, believe, love God, and lead a holy life? Have we not practically mistaken the whole matter, and lost the essential in the circumstantial — the vital in the formal?

A second subject of most serious consideration, connected with the means of increased earnestness, is, whether really the church of God has yet so fully answered as it might have done, and should have done, the divine purpose for which it was set up, and which is, to bear witness of the truth to the nations, and to convert them to God. If it has, how shall we account for it, that in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, five sixths of the population of the globe are Pagans, or Mahometans — that Christendom itself is covered with such hideous corruptions of the gospel — and that even the more spiritual professors of it are so deeply sunk in worldliness? Surely it is time to ask, how it is that with such a divine constitution in the world, and set up for such a purpose, its design has not been more fully realized?

Thirdly. Has the church ever yet thoroughly understood and seriously revolved its own design, and the wondrous power with which it is, or might be, invested, for the accomplishment of this end? The most devoted Romanist that ever lived, who has sacrificed everything for the church, is right, quite right, in his idea of the importance of *the church*, and is wrong only in applying that designation to *his* communion. The church, viewed in all its relations, is God's grandest, noblest idea, and when fully developed will reveal more of God than all the universe besides. Have we, in dwelling upon our connection with the church, felt as if we were lifted up, by that one relationship, into an elevation of surprising height, grandeur, and importance; and as if, therefore, the business of our existence were to answer the purpose of our church fellowship? And then, have we studied, and studied deeply, the wondrous spiritual power there would be in the church if it were in such a state as it might and should be? Suppose it were indeed

“ the tabernacle of God with man ” — “ having the glory of God ” — and “ filled with all the *fulness* of God ” — what a moral power would it not contain, and must it not exert ! Suppose all its ministers were full of knowledge, piety, and zeal — living only for the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers — each in his place a burning and a shining light. Suppose all its lay officers were like the first deacons, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and given up to the welfare of the divine community of believers upon earth. Suppose all the corruptions that distort the form of Christianity and its doctrines were done away, and the whole professing church were entirely the pillar and ground of the truth. Suppose all the members of the church were consistent in their conduct — full of holy unction in their souls — all self-dedicated, each with his one, five, or ten talents, whether of knowledge, wealth, influence — and all united and harmonious. Suppose, I say, this *were* the state of the church, what wondrous moral power it would contain, and how soon then would its design be accomplished in the conversion of the world ! Just in proportion as this is its state now, is its power already. Yes, it has a weight, and an influence now, low as it is, compared with this representation, which nothing else wields. It is already silently swaying to a considerable extent the world’s destinies ; and what would be its power if it were brought up to its proper standard ?

Such are some of the topics which must become the subjects of reflection with the people of God, if there be any hope of increased earnestness in religion. The mind must be occupied with these momentous subjects. Something higher and nobler than matters of business, or politics, or science, or of fashion, or even of church polity, must possess their hearts. The world must be less, and the church more, in their esteem. It is only on the broad, deep basis of such reflections that we can raise a sound and enduring superstructure of more intense piety. The church, the true church — the church in its scriptural meaning — in its spiritual nature — as it is viewed by God, and not as it is considered by ecclesiastics, statesmen, historians, must become a matter of intense

thoughtfulness, solicitude, conversation, and discussion by professing Christians. Here we must begin, if we would have it what it should be, and what God intended it to be.

II. Let the increased earnestness of the church be the subject of devout, serious, and general conversation. It must not be dismissed in a spirit either of levity, or of self-complacency. It will not do sneeringly to say, "Leave the subject to the gloomy croakers, and the self-conceited reformers; the church is in a very good state, and need not be disturbed by a set of evangelical pharisees." They who speak thus cannot surely have read the New Testament with attention and seriousness, nor have compared with its requirements the state of their own hearts, or that of the Christian church at large. Are we, then, so holy, heavenly, and devout, so dead to the world, and so devoted to Christ and his cause, as to need no advance? So thought not Paul, when, in reference to his own personal experience, he would forget the things that were behind, and reach forth unto those that were before. A spirit of self-satisfaction and complacency — a resting in things as they are — a good-enough state of mind, will, if we cherish it, be our bane. We shall never be in earnest at all, if we think we are in earnest enough. The very word, earnestness, implies an intense desire after what we have not at all, or after more of what we already possess. Instead, therefore, of self-complacency and satisfaction, let each member of every church begin to think seriously and devoutly upon the importance and necessity of improvement and growth. Let each speak of it to his fellow-Christian, and raise a general reference to the matter. Let it be the talk of the church, the theme of the day. When it is uppermost in our hearts, it will be sure to be the topic of our conversation in company. When, instead of being contented with our state, we begin to say, "We *must* have more life, more vigor, more action, in our piety," then we *shall* have it. Especially let us resist the efforts of those, who, not wishing to be stimulated themselves, will endeavor to persuade us that things are well enough already, and should be let alone. There never will, never can, be

more earnestness, till a felt need of it pervade the Christian church, till it has seized and possessed the public mind, and has become the topic of general discourse.

III. It is of immense importance that this subject should be brought frequently and urgently before the churches, by the ministrations of the pulpit. The strain of preaching should be of a character that tends to foster this spirit. What is the design of ministerial and pastoral duties, if not to accomplish this end? Every minister should often ask himself a few such questions as the following: — “What is genuine earnestness of personal religion? What kind of ministry is adapted to promote it? Is mine such a ministry?” Without a thorough understanding of all these topics, no man can hope to accomplish the end of his office, and promote around him a spirit of intense and consistent religion. If ministerial notions of religion are loose, and extend no further than to outward and conventional decorum — if ministers are strangers themselves to any great power of the divine life, and see no great need of it in others — if they set down as enthusiasm, or as religious cant, the influence of religion upon the heart, and a high-toned spirituality — if they are lukewarm in their affections, worldly in their tastes and habits, and lax in their theology — then, nothing can be expected from their sermons in the pulpit, or their conversation in the parlor, that is likely to increase the earnestness of their churches. Their ministration will inevitably partake of the character of their own personal religion. They will not express, much less inculcate, a fervor they do not feel. It becomes them to take care that there does not spring up among the pastors of the evangelical dissenting churches, a class answering to the Moderates of the Church of Scotland, and the anti-evangelical clergy of the Church of England; men, whose hearts are uninfluenced by the truth as it is in Jesus, and about whom this very truth itself hangs but loosely; whose sermons are dry discussions of mere ethical subjects; whose demeanor may be marked by official decorum, but whose character, conduct, and ministrations, are devoid of that evangelical sentiment, spirituality, unction, fervor, which alone can promote similar views and

feelings among the people. Everything, under God, depends upon the ministry: earnest churches cannot be expected but from earnest preachers. But it will be unnecessary to enlarge here upon a topic which has already formed the subject of a volume, and it shall therefore be only further remarked, that, unless the pulpit be made to bear with all its power on this very point, there is little hope of any increase in the earnestness of the churches. The whole combined influence of the preachers of God's glorious gospel is indispensable. The standard of personal godliness must be lifted up, and lifted high, too. The nature of sanctification, as well as regeneration, must be explained, and its necessity insisted upon—the life of God in the soul enforced—the separation of the people of God from the people of the world enjoined—and a habit of self-denial and mortification inculcated. There must be no sewing pillows under the arms of sleepy professors—no spirit of accommodation to the requirements of worldly-minded Christians—no prophesying of smooth things—no healing the hurt of the daughter of Zion slightly—no crying peace, peace, to them that are at ease in Zion. On the contrary, the defects and sins of professors must be pointed out rebuked, and denounced—their judgments must be informed of the nature of true godliness—their consciences awakened, and their resolution of amendment engaged. For this purpose the most unsparing fidelity, combined with the greatest affection, must be used, every energy roused, and the whole course of the ministry directed so as to bring up the piety of the churches to the standard of God's Holy Word. And all this must at the same time be entered into and approved of by the people. Instead of being offended by the plainness of the minister, they must admire his courage and applaud his fidelity; instead of resenting his affectionate solicitude to aid them in the crucifixion of besetting sins, and drawing them out of the entanglements of the world, they should feel grateful for such self-denying offices of his generous friendship; instead of quarrelling with him for his puritanic notions and unnecessary strictness, they ought to hold up *his* hands, in holding up the law of God

as the divine mirror by which they are to examine and adjust themselves.

IV. If the church be ever stirred up to greater earnestness, it must be by the greater earnestness of its individual members. We have already had frequent occasion, in this work, to remark that there is a fatal propensity, in the members of all communities, to get rid of individual responsibility, and, by a fiction, to think of the responsibility of the body. There is, in reality, no such thing as a collective conscience; bodies, as such, cannot be accountable. God will not, as regards eternity, deal with nations, or churches, or families. It was a fine purpose of a young Christian which he thus entered in his diary: "Resolved that I will, the Lord being my helper, think, speak, and act, as an *individual*; for as such I must live, as such I must die, stand before God, and be damned or saved forever and ever. I have been waiting for others; I must act as if I were the only one to act, and wait no longer." This is just the view and the purpose to be taken by us all. It is as individuals we must act for ourselves, and he who acts for himself in this matter will certainly influence others. Every man acts upon some other man. Example is influence. The diffusion of religion is like the kindling of a fire, or the lighting of so many tapers; one original flame may, by contact, communicate itself to a multitude of other points. It was said of Harlan Page, by one who knew him intimately, "I have well considered the assertion when I say, that during nine years, in which we were associated in labors, I do not know that I ever passed an interview with him long enough to have any interchange of thought and feeling, in which I did not receive from him an impulse heavenward—an impulse onward in duty to God and the souls of men." If this could be said of all professing Christians, we should see earnestness in reality.

Let it, then, be now formally, seriously, and solemnly proposed, that each reader of this volume will seriously and immediately begin to be more in earnest for himself. Let him indulge in some such reflections as these: "If the church is ever made more earnest, it must be by an in-

creased earnestness in its individual members. *I* am one of those members, and am as much bound to advance in the divine life as any other. It is but hypocrisy, gross, disgusting hypocrisy, to lament over the low state of religion in the church, and to desire a revival, while *I* am unconcerned about the state of my own religion, and do not seek a revival of that. I will begin with myself. I will wait for no other. *I must* be more in earnest, and, God helping me, I will be." We may now just notice the steps which such a person ought to take to accomplish his resolution.

Let him turn away from all the conventional piety of the day, and read over, with devout attention, what is said, in a former chapter, of the true nature of genuine piety.

Let him, in a season of closet devotion, examine his own piety, and compare it with this standard.

Let him, upon discovering his great and numerous short-comings, humble and abase himself before God, in a spirit of true contrition.

Let him reject all excuses which his own deceitful heart, and lukewarm, worldly-minded Christians, will be ever ready to suggest, for self-defence, and be thoroughly convinced that nothing can, or will, be admitted by God as an apology for a low state of personal religion.

Let him intensely desire to be raised from his depressed condition into a more exalted state of spirituality, heavenly-mindedness, and devoted zeal.

Let him set himself most vigorously to the work of mortifying sin and crucifying the flesh.

Let him redouble his diligence in attending the means of grace, and especially let him give himself to reading the Scriptures, meditation, and prayer.

Let him add season to season of special humiliation and supplication, to obtain a new and copious effusion of the Holy Spirit of God.

Let him cultivate a new and more delicate sensibility of conscience, in reference to all matters of offence, both towards God and man.

Let him seek to have his mind illuminated by the

Spirit and Word of God, in the knowledge of the person, offices, and work, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let him give himself to Christian vigilance, watching ever against sin.

Let him, in short, intelligently, resolutely, and unalterably, make up his mind to enter upon a new course of personal godliness, so new that his past attainments shall seem as if they were nothing. There is such a thing as starting afresh, as forgetting the things that are behind — and so must it be with him who would be really in earnest. He will wake up from his slumbering, dreamy profession, saying, “I have slept too long and too much; I must now throw off the spirit of sloth, and give all diligence to make my calling and election sure.”

V. There must be an increased and pervading spirit of believing and importunate prayer, especially for the outpouring of the Spirit of God. If it is saying too much to affirm that the earnestness of religion is identical with the earnestness of prayer, because this would seem to imply that prayer is the whole of religion, it is *not* too much to say that earnestness in religion is ever characterized by earnestness of prayer, and that there is really no more of the former than there is of the latter. It is absolutely impossible, in the nature of things, that either an individual, a church, or an age, can be earnest in piety, where there is lukewarmness in devotion. The church needs the spirit of prayer, both for its own internal state and for its external operations — for its own spiritual life, and for its influence upon the world — for its more perfect sanctification, and for its more extensive usefulness.

Let it be borne in recollection that religion is a divine creation, a heavenly production; there is not a particle of it in our world, but what cometh down from above — no, not a ray of holy light, nor a glow of spiritual warmth, but what is an emission from the fountain of celestial radiance and fire. All on earth will be sterility and desolation till the shower descends from the clouds which hang around the throne of God. The world can no more be regenerated and sanctified, without the work of the Holy Spirit, than it can be redeemed without the

blood of the Son of God. The soul that is not visited by these genial influences of the new heavens will be a *desert* soul; without these, the church will be a desert church; the world a desert world. We cannot be too deeply convinced of the need of the Spirit's operation — a defect of conviction on this point is radical, and will enervate everything, and cause ultimate and universal disappointment. Deny or forget, or only coldly and theoretically admit, this, and whatever forms of individual devotion, and creeds of orthodoxy, we may maintain — whatever systems of ecclesiastical polity we may set up — whatever societies of confederated zeal we may organize, we are only building a Babel to proclaim our folly, or a mausoleum to entomb our religion. This great truth must not go down even in the shadow of the cross. While we contend for the free agency, and therefore the responsibility, of man, and press these home upon the conscience, still we must recollect that the sinner never *will* do, what in one sense he *can* do, till he is made willing in the day of God's power. All hope of, and all attempt at, revival, either in our own soul, or in our own church, or in our own age, must begin here. This *is* to begin at the beginning. "O Christians, is there such a doctrine in our creed as the doctrine of divine influence? Is there such an Agent in the church as the almighty Spirit of God? Is he amongst us expressly to testify of Christ — to be the great animating spirit of his missionary witness, the church? and is it true that his unlimited aid can be obtained by prayer — that we can be baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire? O, ye that preach, 'believe the promise of the Spirit, and be saved.' Ye that love the Lord, keep not silence; send up a loud, long, united, and unsparing entreaty for his promised aid. This, this is what we want. And this is all we want. Till this be obtained, all the angelic agency of heaven will avail us nothing; and when it is obtained, all that agency will be unequal to the celebration of our triumphs."*

Let this impressive and beautiful paragraph be written

* "The Witnessing Church."

upon our hearts, repeated by our lips, and sounded by ten thousand echoes throughout the land. This must be the burden of the church's prayers, for God has suspended, to a considerable extent, the outpouring of the Spirit, upon the supplications of his people; an arrangement by which he honors himself in being thus publicly acknowledged as the Author of all good, and at the same time honors his church by making her the medium through which the blessing descends. What a tremendous responsibility, then, does this devolve upon the church! If it depended upon our prayers whether the sun should rise, or the rain should descend, upon the inhabitants of the other hemisphere, should we not, if we neglected prayer, be chargeable with the perpetual night, and desolating drought, which resulted to the countless millions that perished for lack of the light of day, and the fertilizing shower? Had we any bowels of compassion, should we ever look up at the orb of day, or the floating cisterns in the clouds of heaven, without imploring the God of nature to forward their inestimable treasures to the benighted and starving inhabitants of other regions? Christians, the moral world is in darkness and in drought for want of your prayers—sin reigns, Satan triumphs, hell is peopled, through the want of your prayers—the dominion of Christ, the spread of truth, the millennial glory, are hindered through the want of your prayers—your missionary societies and all your organizations of pious zeal; your abounding liberality and active exertions, are but very partially successful, through the want of your prayers. Think of this, and tremble at your responsibility, and tremble still more at your insensibility. Yes, what we want is more prayer. I know we want money, we want men—but we want prayer still more. More prayer will give us more of everything else that is necessary. Hear the testimony of your missionaries sent to us from the midst of their difficulties among the heathen—“Brethren, *pray* for us;” transmitted to us from their sick and dying beds, “Brethren, *pray* for us;” delivered to us, when, wasted and worn, they come back to England to recruit their enfeebled strength, “Brethren, *pray* for us;”—this, this is the

emphatic supplication from every missionary station under heaven, and borne to us by every breeze and every wave that touches our shore, "Brethren, *pray* for us." Could all the missionaries of all the societies, and from all the stations upon earth, assemble in one place, however they may differ on some points of doctrine and discipline, they would be perfectly harmonious in bearing this testimony, that *prayer is the best hope of the missionary cause.*

We were never more in danger of forgetting the importance and necessity of prayer than at the present moment. Our institutions have risen to a magnitude and extension which are grand and imposing; it is an age of great societies, an era of organization, when there is imminent peril of trusting to the wisdom of committees, and the power of eloquence, of numbers, and of money, instead of the power of prayer. We cannot, I know, do without organization, and it makes one's heart throb with delight to see to what an extent it is carried. The annual list which is published of our May meetings is one of the greatest wonders of the age, the brightest glories of the church, and the richest hopes of posterity. That one document appears to my eye as the ruby-tinted clouds of the orient sky, which announce the approach of the millennial orb. But then our glory is our danger; this very organization may seduce us, and I am afraid *is* seducing us, and has seduced us, from our dependence upon God, till organization is likely to become the image of jealousy, which maketh jealous in the temple of the Lord.

An eloquent speaker once said upon a missionary platform, "Money, money, money, is the life's blood of the missionary cause!" I would substitute another word, and say, "*Prayer, prayer, prayer,* is the life's blood of the missionary cause." I am no enthusiast; I do not expect our cause to be sustained without money; nor do I expect gold to be rained out of heaven into our coffers. Money we must have, in far greater abundance than we now have, and money will come at the bidding of prayer. If we had more fervent, believing supplication, we should

have more wealth. The same spirit of sincere and importunate supplication which would bring down the treasures of heavenly grace, would call forth the supplies of earthly means. I repeat, what I think I have said somewhere else, that I could be almost content that for the next year not a word was said about money, and the church be summoned universally to intense and believing supplication. Ministers of the gospel, lay this matter upon the consciences of your flocks; instruct them in their duty, and urge them to it. Remind them that what we need is not only a giving church, and a working church, but a praying church. Tell them that praying for the coming down of the Spirit is not to be confined to the Sabbath and the pulpit, nor to the missionary and social prayer meeting, but that it is every man's business at his own family altar, and in his closet. Then, when the whole church of God, with all its families apart, and every individual member apart, shall be engaged in a spirit of believing and fervent supplication; then may it be expected the Spirit of God will come down in power and glory upon the earth — and not till then, whatever of organization, of wealth, of eloquence, or of numbers, may be engaged in the cause of Christian missions. Activity and devotion — giving and praying — a conscientious zeal, and a feeling of entire dependence upon God, must be nicely balanced in all we do. The more we give, the more we should pray; and the more we pray, the more we should give. The proportions are often disturbed; — *our* danger in this day lies in an excess of activity over the spirit of prayer. Let us restore the balance, and bring on an era which shall be characterized as the praying age of the missionary enterprise.

Our supplications should be the prayers of faith. We ought to know and to feel that the cause of missions is no mere experiment in the spiritual world, no invention of man, no mere tentative scheme — but an attempt, the success of which is guaranteed by all the attributes of the eternal God, and which should therefore be supplicated in the full confidence of assured expectation. And to faith, we must add fervor; we must pray for the regeneration of the world, with an intelligent perception of

what is included in that wondrous phrase, "a world converted from idolatry to Christ," with a recollection that this is in some sense suspended upon our prayers — and with such an importunity as we might be supposed to employ if the world's salvation depended upon our individual intercession.

But this spirit of prayer is needed by the church, not only to give power and efficiency to her operations for the conversion of sinners, but for her own internal improvement — to increase, and indeed to indicate, her earnestness for her own salvation. She needs an outpouring of the Spirit upon herself, to rouse her from her lukewarmness, and to elevate her to a higher state of purity, fervor, and consistency. She needs revival, and it can be looked for only in answer to the fervent prayer of faith, and in answer to such prayers it may be ever and everywhere expected. To say nothing of other instances well known, and some of them alluded to in this work, I may refer to the success of that flaming seraph, Mr. M'Cheyne, of the Free Church of Scotland, whose early death, in the midst of his usefulness, is one of the mysteries of Providence too deep to sound with mortal lines. He thus records in his diary the spirit of prayer which prevailed among his people, "Many prayer-meetings were formed, some of which were strictly private; and others, conducted by persons of some Christian experience, were open to persons under concern, at one another's houses. At the time of my returning from the mission to the Jews, I found *thirty-nine* such meetings *held weekly*, in connection with the congregation." O that this beautiful instance of coöperation with the minister, by the people, prevailed through all our churches! Look at it, professing Christians — ponder it, church members! The whole church, or, at any rate, its more experienced members, resolving themselves into thirty-nine prayer associations, meeting weekly, fostering new converts, and all this in the absence of the pastor! When shall this pattern be imitated? When shall all our deacons, and leading members, go and do likewise? When shall our churches be made up of praying members, and be full of the spirit of prayer after this fashion? This is the ear-

nestness of a church — the earnestness of religion — the earnestness of prayer. Revivals will always come, where this is found. It is itself a revival.

If there be one thing which is more suited to our condition, and more prompted by our necessities, it is prayer — if there be one duty which is more frequently enjoined by the precepts, or more beautifully enforced by the examples, of Scripture, it is prayer — if there be one practice in which the experience of all good men of every age, every country, and every church, has more entirely agreed, it is prayer — if there be one thing which more decisively marks the spirit of sincere and individual piety, it is prayer ; so that it may be safely affirmed, where the spirit of prayer is low in the soul of an individual, a country, an age, or a church, whatever else there may be, of morality, of ceremony, of liberality, the spirit of religion is low also.

Now it is most seriously to be apprehended that this deficiency of prayer is the characteristic of our age. It is a preaching age, a speaking age, a hearing age, but not eminently a praying one. Men are too busy to pray. Even the most distinguished Christians are too apt to shorten the seasons of prayer, in order to lengthen those of secular and sacred business. Everything is against the spirit of prayer, not only in the world, but in the church. I know very well we cannot expect, in such an age as ours, the same spirit of devotion as prevailed in persecuting times, when John Welsh, one of the men of the Covenant, spent whole days praying in the church of Ayr for his parishioners, wrestling alone with God — who used to lay his plaid by his bedside, and to rise often in the middle of the night, wrap himself in his garment, pour out his soul to his Maker, and say, “I wonder how a Christian can lie in bed all night, and not rise to pray !” We do not expect even the most holy ministers to spend eight hours a day in prayer, as he did, who had little to do but to suffer, and to pray ; but surely we may expect more of the spirit of prayer than we now witness, either in pastors or their flocks.

There is one view of prayer, which has not been so much considered as it should be ; and that is its reflex

power, or, in other words, the *moral influence* of prayer upon the individual mind engaged in it. No doubt it is an expressive homage paid to God, and an appointed means of obtaining blessings from above; but it is more, for it is an ordinance of self-edification. The offspring of our desires, it reacts upon its source, making them more strong, more vivid, more solemn, more prolonged, and more definite as to their objects; forming them into expressions to God will concentrate the soul in them, and upon their objects. Every sincere act of adoration increases our veneration for the divine character — every confession of sin deepens our penitence — every petition for a favor cherishes a sense of dependence — every intercession for others expands our philanthropy — and every acknowledgement of a mercy inflames our gratitude. Every good man is, therefore, the better for his own prayers, which not only obtain other good things, but are good to him themselves. Hence, when an individual can be stirred up to pray more for increased earnestness of religion, his supplication contains both the prayer and its answer, and affords a literal fulfilment of the promise, “Before they call I will answer.” Thus a good man never entirely loses his prayers, for if they do no good, and bring no blessing to others, they do to himself. Whenever the church, therefore, is stirred up to a more intense spirit of prayer for a revival, the revival is begun.

But the benefit does not stop here, for God will answer such supplications, and bestow the gift that is sought. God is ever waiting to be gracious. His language ever is, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” The promises to this effect are so numerous, and so express, that it would seem as if the church might enjoy any measure of divine power, which she had the piety to desire, the faith to ask, or the will to receive. She is invited to launch forth into all the fulness of God, and to replenish herself with the inexhaustible riches of divine grace.

The best way to ascertain how much of the spirit of prayer is wanting, or is possessed, in this day, is, for each reader of this volume to ask how it is with *him*. He best knows himself, and his own practice, and he may therefore say, "Suppose my case is not singular, but an average, as there is reason to suppose it is, what is the state of the Christian church?" And what will that individual find to be the case with himself? How much time in each day does he devote to this most incumbent, most momentous duty, to pray for his conduct in life, his salvation, his family, his church, the world? How much, as compared with other things? With his relaxation from business, his recreation, the time he gives to the newspaper, or even to absolute vacuity? Is there not a frequent reluctance to the duty? Is it not often performed rather from a haunting sense of duty, and to silence the accusations of conscience, than from any attractions sweet and irresistible, coming over the heart from the throne of grace? Is there not a habit of letting come first to be attended to, any inferior thing that may offer itself, and a disposition to postpone the exercise to a more convenient time, and a more appropriate frame? Is there no habit of "making social or domestic prayer a partial excuse for omitting the private exercise; a kind of acquittance, the share of a social exercise being reckoned enough for the whole tribute of an individual, as if a social tribute were for the purpose of gaining an exemption for each individual?" Now, how much prayer, such as really deserves the name, is going up to heaven continually from the church, and for it? Surely, surely, we need far more, and must have far more, if the Spirit shall come down in plentitude and power, to make us more earnest in religion.

VI. Special seasons of devotion, instituted with immediate reference to the revival and increase of religion, are adapted to promote this object, and are, therefore, of considerable importance. This is perhaps one of the most difficult practical subjects of the present volume, and will require the greatest caution in treating it. A prejudice, founded partly on observation, and partly upon report, but rarely upon experience, against any efforts beyond

the ordinary course of ministerial and pastoral labor, exists in many minds; and if some instances of revival efforts were made the example or the standard of what is here meant by special services, they are to be dreaded and deprecated by every lover of sobriety of mind, and every friend to the credit of our holy religion. Scenes more resembling Bedlam, than the solemnities of the house of God, have been set forth under the name of "revival meetings," to the disgust of the wise, the grief of the good, and the scandal of the bad. Nor is it any justification of such frantic orgies, to allege that souls have been converted. Very likely. But how many have imbibed invincible prejudice against all religion, how many more, after the excitement has passed off, have become increasingly hardened, and how many have received a distaste for the ordinary and more sober ministrations of the gospel! There is, no doubt, a power in the eternal truths of the Word of God, that will exert itself, under God's Spirit, in defiance of all the revolting and inharmonious adjuncts with which they may be sometimes associated. It is not, perhaps, to be questioned, that if some of the monstrosities of the Church of Rome, such, for instance, as dramatic exhibitions of the Saviour's passion, were united by some popular and energetic preacher of the gospel, with a vivid appeal to the conscience, in the statement of evangelical truths, souls might be converted from the error of their ways; but would this authorize and justify us, in representing the scenes of Calvary upon a stage? We eschew then, at once, and forever, all attempts at revival which offend against the majesty and sobriety of divine truth, — which violate the proprieties of public worship — produce an excitement of the passions that amounts to a kind of mental intoxication — and render tame, tasteless, and insipid, the ordinary ministrations of the sanctuary.

But is there no middle course between wild extravagance and dull formality? Between the performances of the actor, and the somnolence of the sluggard? Shall no stimulating treatment be adopted by a judicious physician with a collapsed patient, because some ignorant quacks have carried it so far as to bring on epilepsy or

madness? I know it is the opinion of many, that all attempts to keep up, or to increase, the spirit of vital godliness in the church, and to multiply conversions, by special services, tend to relax, on the part of both ministers and their flocks, their diligence in the use of such as are stated; and to teach them to rely on occasional and spasmodic exertions, rather than on such as are habitual. Our object, they say, should be to produce a constant and well-sustained earnestness, rather than a fitful and transient one; just as, in regard to our bodies, our aim is habitually to keep up robust health, rather than to neglect it, and trust to occasional and extraordinary means for restoring it. This is true. But surely if, in the latter case, it be well to resort to special means of cure, *when* the health is impaired, and the strength is reduced, — and in the best constitutions this will sometimes take place — it must be equally proper, so far the analogy holds good, to follow this rule in reference to religion. In the best and the most watchful Christians, piety, alas! will occasionally decline: first love will abate, and vital godliness be among “the things that remain; and that are ready to die.” Who does not feel this, and lament it too? Have not all in whose soul is the life of God, and who are anxious to maintain that life in vigor, found it necessary occasionally to observe special seasons of examination, humiliation, and prayer? Is there a volume of religious biography of any eminently good man extant, that does not give us an account of his days of fasting and devotion, which he observed to obtain a revival of religion in his soul? Is there a Christian in real earnestness for salvation, one of more than usual piety, that does not feel it necessary to add an occasional season of devotion to his accustomed duties, in order to recover lost ground, and to advance in the divine life? And does this practice take him off from his usual and regular duties of meditation and prayer? On the contrary, does it not rather lead him to supply defects, to correct negligences, and to pursue his course with fresh vigor and alacrity? Surely, if this be the case with the *individual* Christian, the same thing may be affirmed of a Christian church.

By special services are not meant fixed periodical

ones, such as yearly fasts, or a regular annual repetition of continuous preachings; for such cease to be special, and become a part of the ordinary means, and are themselves liable to sink into the same dulness of routine, and deadness of formalism, as the more frequent and ordinary means.

What is meant by special services, are some such exercises as the following. An occasional day of fasting, humiliation and prayer, by a religious denomination, to which all the churches shall be *invited* by the committees that manage their affairs, or which shall be determined upon by the churches themselves at their general gathering.

An occasional meeting for solemn prayer by the directors of our public institutions, when all business shall be excluded, and nothing else done but invoking the blessing of God upon their plans, their councils, and their objects; and thus a devotional spirit be infused into all their operations. It is true they generally commence every meeting with prayer, but who has not felt how perfunctorily this is often done?

How much would it tend to keep up a right feeling and a fervent spirit in the ministry, if the pastors within a district of twenty or thirty miles diameter were occasionally to meet, and spend a couple of days together in solemn prayer, unrestrained conference, and mutual exhortation! What solemn discourse — what deep utterances of the heart — what intercommunion of soul — might not then take place! As it now is, we meet only for *business, business, business*, till we return to our homes, revived a little, perhaps, in body, for the journey, but not one whit better, sometimes even worse, in our spiritual state.

Single churches could, by voluntary resolution of their own, determine to keep occasionally a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. In the olden times of our forefathers, this was by no means uncommon; but, alas! in our busy day we find little time, and have less inclination, for such exercises. True it might be difficult to command a week day for such a purpose; what hinders, then, that a Sabbath should not sometimes be thus

appropriated, and the services of that day all be made to bear on the object?

Where whole churches do not set apart such seasons, why may not a few of the members, who are like-minded in their devotional habits, in their yearnings after a higher tone of spiritual feeling, and their longing for the out-pouring of the Spirit, agree together, to meet at particular times for special prayer? How blessed an invitation is it to issue from some spiritually-minded Christian to his fellows, "Come, let us set apart a season of special prayer for a revival of true piety in our church, in the denomination, and the whole church of God."

But there is another kind of special services, which, for the purpose of conversion, might be resorted to with great advantage, if conducted with propriety; I mean continuous preaching, carried on for several successive days, and accompanied by earnest prayer on the part of the members of the church. As already intimated, this plan has been lamentably abused; not only by certain men, called "revivalist preachers," whose outrageous rant, "pious frauds," and solemn trickery, have done so much mischief, and have furnished the lukewarm with an apology for formalism; but by others, who have made such services a mere pretence to call attention to a partially deserted place, or to puff an unknown minister into notice, till one almost loathes the very name of "revival meetings." But how different from all this "bellows' blowing," as Mr. Jay called it, are the sober and solemn services which have been, and still are, carried on by some ministers, to call, by special efforts, the attention of the careless to the awful verities of eternal truth! When a minister perceives that little good seems to result from his preaching, that souls are not converted, and that professors are lukewarm and worldly, is there anything contrary to sobriety, to reason, to revelation, to the laws of propriety, or to the mental economy of man, in determining by a continuous series of services, sustained through the evenings of a whole week, to keep religion before the minds of the people, and rouse their slumbering attention to its high import? Is this not per-

fectly consonant with the strictest decorum, with the most refined spiritual sensibility? Shall science, shall politics, shall literature, have their special services, and not religion? How likely a plan is it to rouse the minds of the careless — to fix the thoughts of the volatile — to decide the choice of the wavering — and to enkindle the ardor of the lukewarm, thus to carry on a succession of appeals to them through a whole week! Keep out extravagance; let there be no anxious seat, no vociferation, no extravagant appeals to the passions; but only the vivid, solemn, and faithful exhibition of the truth. As one minister, the pastor, may not have strength enough for such services, another, or more than one, may be called on to assist him. During all this while, much prayer should ascend from the church for the divine blessing to come down upon such efforts. What can be objected to in such a scheme? Who has ever tried it without a blessed result? What, in fact, were the labors of Whitfield and Wesley, yea, what were the labors of apostles, but such continuous services as these? It is said of the blessed Paul, he disputed, or, as it signifies by a better translation, discoursed, *daily* in the school of Tyrannus.

What are we doing by the *ordinary* means? What souls are we converting to God by our regular routine? Does not the work of reconciliation languish in our hands? Are not the thousands and tens of thousands perishing at our doors, and going down to the pit before our eyes? And shall we be contented with routine, formality, and custom, in our way of saving them? Shall we be afraid to step out of our ordinary course, even to pluck sinners as brands from the eternal burning?

Shall we be afraid, lest, by adopting some new means, however little differing from the stated services of the sanctuary, we shall incur the charge of enthusiasm in our attempts to carry out the purposes for which the Son of God expired upon the cross? Enthusiasm! I wish we better deserved the charge, and were more entitled to the accusation. Enthusiasm! Where is the cause in our world that more deserves or demands it, in a

modified and chastened meaning, than that of saving immortal souls from eternal perdition? Enthusiasm! Bid the man who is snatching his fellow-creatures from the flames, or from the wreck, not to be an enthusiast in his heroic generosity, and the admonition will be far more seasonable and appropriate than addressed to him who steps a little out of the ordinary track to convert sinners from the error of their ways, save souls from death, and hide multitudes of sins. Enthusiasm! Carry the charge, as upon the principles of many of our bigots to formalism we justly may, to that great man who said, "If by any means I might save some, I could even wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." O, were that man again in our world, what would he think, or what would he say, of the fastidiousness of some of our ministers and churches, about the propriety of stepping ever so little out of the ordinary way of conducting the services of religion! The world is perishing — the great masses of our population are sinking more and more under the power of infidelity and irreligion; and we stand by asking what can be done, and are afraid to try any new scheme of action for their salvation, however discreet or well adapted, lest we should discompose the dress, or ruffle the fringes, of our habits of ecclesiastical order; as if it were better that men should go down unobstructed to the pit, than that our formalism should be in the least disturbed, for their salvation!

On writing for his opinion on this subject to one whom God has honored and blessed in his efforts, and who is one of the most devout and sober-minded of our brethren, he thus replies to my inquiries: "I think that, considering the state of the churches generally, there is a call for something of this kind. The ministers are unsettled, which they would not be if they were doing good. I am sorry to say, also, the churches are often dissatisfied with their ministers, an evil which would be obviated were more good accomplished. It appears to me that special efforts, if wisely conducted, would be productive of much benefit; first of all, to the ministers themselves, in teaching them to understand better the

nature of the work in which they are engaged. They would be led to know more how to aim at the conversion of sinners in their preaching. Secondly, it would do much good to the churches, in arousing them to a better conception of their calling and duty, and they would acquire more of the taste for seeing good done, which would render them discontented with the desolation around them, and constrain them to give themselves more to prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit. When a church has once witnessed a season of revival, it is much more likely to witness the same again and again, than one that knows nothing of it but by hearsay. Thirdly, the world around the church where the special effort is made will often receive an impression, the effects of which are visible for many years. Thoughts are first started in the mind which are not for long after matured into conversion. This I look upon as the greatest of all the benefits derived from special efforts. A leaven is cast into the community, which makes the regular preaching of the gospel afterwards much more efficacious. I am sure this was the case at C—, and I have reason to believe it has been the case at other places also."

This is the testimony of reason and experience, and cannot be gainsaid. Similar testimony is borne by all who have had the courage to institute such services, the fervor necessary for their efficiency, and the discretion requisite to conduct them with propriety.

VII. If we would have an increase of earnest religion, we must expect it, and look for it. There must be a frame of mind the opposite of despondency. We must not conclude that even in this age of worldliness, the thing is impossible. There is enough of truth in the promise, and power in the Spirit of God, to accomplish this great achievement, and raise the church out of its comparatively low condition, into a much loftier elevation of piety and devotedness, if we have but faith to receive the blessing. This is what we want—a faith equal to the promise of God. If we could bring up our minds to the point of expectation, we should soon reach that of possession. We have not, because we ask not: and we

ask not, because we expect not. Let us only intensely long, and earnestly pray, and diligently labor — and then we are warranted to expect. When did God ever excite expectation of this kind, and not fulfil it? There is everything to warrant expectation. *God is able to help us*, and give us any measure of grace we need. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. This has been the hope and triumph of the church in every age. He can open the heavens, and pour down salvation. He can make the wilderness like Eden, and the desert like the garden of the Lord! When we undertake anything for the revival of religion, and the cause of the Redeemer, little as our encouragements may be from any other quarter, we cannot expect too much from God. We may take hope *from the nature of the object we are pursuing*. What is it we are looking for? Religion is God's own cause in our world. It is the only cause which is his in the fullest sense of the word. It is his highest and noblest production upon earth — that in which he has a deeper interest, and on which his heart is more set, than any other. In our attempts to promote an increase of religion, we may encourage expectation from the fact that *God has ever blessed the attempts of others*. When and where did it ever fail? No, the whole history of the church does not furnish a single instance of united, vigorous, humble, and believing prayer, labor, and expectation, being disappointed. *Our own experience, limited as it is, sustains our hope*. Did we ever yet put forth our energies, in fervent supplication and rigid mortification, and not find a perceptible advance in spiritual religion? Did we ever yet spend an extraordinary season of humiliation and prayer, without a consciousness of a more intense reality in our religion?

O Christians! throw off your despondency then; adopt the noble maxim of the immortal Carey: *attempt great things — expect great things*. Granting that there is much in the church that is delightful to contemplate, is it what it ought to be — what it might be? Abandon the idea that it never can be better. Reject the suggestion that it is as holy, spiritual, and heavenly-minded as it can ever

expect to be in such an age and such a country as this ; that it is so environed with influences hostile to the spirit of piety, that it is as high in devotion as it can be expected to be, or need be. Do you say this of *yourselves*? Do you make these excuses for *yourselves*? Are *you* all you can be expected to be, or need be? Are *you* reconciled to a lukewarm state of devotion, a low state of piety, under the soporific, unworthy, unbelieving notion, that nothing better is to be expected, and that God looks for nothing better? If you are, your religion altogether is to be suspected. If not, then be not satisfied with the condition of the church. God has better things in store for us, if we will but have them. Let us only be earnest in prayer—in faith—in labor—and in hope; and who can tell but the day of blessing is near? Already I seem to hear “the sound of abundance of rain.” While bowing your knees, like the prophet on the top of Carmel, some herald of mercy may tell you of “a little cloud that ariseth from the sea,” which, though now no bigger than a man’s hand, may soon cover the heavens, and pour down the refreshing shower!

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION. — THE MILLENNIAL STATE OF THE CHURCH.

IN the foregoing pages we have glanced at the state of the Christian church from its commencement to the present time; and we have seen the imperfections and corruptions which, in its best condition, have hitherto weakened its strength, impaired its beauty, limited its extent, and hindered its usefulness. An interesting inquiry now presents itself, “Will it be always thus, till it is swallowed up of life, glory, and immortality? Is there no hope that it will arise from the earth, shake off the dust, put on its beautiful garments, and array itself as a bride adorned for her husband?” It were a melancholy thing, both for herself and the world, if there were no such expectation. It were a painful thing to look down the valley of time, and see the same divisions,

errors, worldliness, and feebleness, ever within the church; the same Paganism, Mohammedanism, Judaism, and Popery, around it; and no visions of better things advancing to supplant these scenes of the moral world. If what we have seen, or read, is all that Christianity is to do for our race — if the world is never to be converted to Christ, nor the church to be brought into a nearer conformity to the New Testament — then would infidelity triumph, and exultingly affirm that the Son of God had *not* destroyed the works of the devil — that the gospel had been partially, and to a great extent, a failure, and therefore was a fable. We have r apprehension that such a ground of triumph will ever be given to the enemies of our faith. A brighter era is destined to arrive; a golden age is to dawn upon us, when the predictions of prophets, and the descriptions of apostles, are all to be fulfilled, and the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

If, as some eminent commentators suppose, the last two chapters of the book of the Revelation are descriptive of some happy state of the church of Christ on earth, and not of its celestial state, what a scene opens through the vista of time to the eye of faith; what a landscape of surpassing glory, for our dark, disordered world, expands upon the Christian, as from the mount of promise he surveys the promised land! What a state will the church attain to, when “The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it; and the gates shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there; and they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it!” Amidst what united joys of angels and of men will “the holy city, new Jerusalem, be seen coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband!” How welcome will be the great voice out of heaven, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God!”

Yes, glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God, which, like Moses, we may now behold in the distance: —

First of all, there is *preservation*. Hear, O Zion, the word of thy God, and rejoice for thy consolation: “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment shalt thou condemn.

The Lord thy God, in the midst of thee, is mighty; He shall be a wall of fire round about thee, and the glory in the midst of thee." Yes, the church is safe, though nothing else is. Human systems of religion, of government, of philosophy, that are opposed to the principles of revelation, like the billows which roll with ocean's force against a rock, shall successively dash and utterly dissolve. So it ever has been; so it ever will be; till the last foe shall be vanquished. Let infidelity utter its blasphemies, and false philosophy its sophistries, and popery its anathemas—we exultingly repeat, "THE CHURCH IS SAFE." Amidst the wreck of empires, and the subversion of thrones, she rises fresh in beauty and in might, with celestial glory beaming around her, and her enemies fleeing before her. Let no man's heart tremble for fear; no man's brow gather gloom; no man's tongue utter despondency. The celestial bark may be amidst the billows, while the tempest sweeps along the deep, but Jehovah Jesus is on board, and she cannot be lost unless the pilot perish. But we have nothing to fear. Jesus lives forevermore, and is Head over all things to his church. In its lowest state, he has never forsaken her. He never will. His honor is identified with her final triumph. Every harp should therefore be snatched from the willows—new joys should be felt, and new anthems sung, by all the assemblies of the saints; and amidst the convulsions of every age, be this the song of the universal church: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early."

But blessed as it is to know that immutable truth and omnipotent power guarantee the *continuance* of the church, this is the least and lowest of her hopes. *Improvement* in her spiritual condition is another thing which the church is authorized to expect. The earnestness now desiderated will be given to her. Even before she shall assume her celestial form, and be presented a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, her spots will not be so dark, nor her wrinkles so deep, nor her blemishes so obvious, as they now are. She will appear, even upon earth,

invested with something of celestial radiance and beauty. It is impossible even superficially to study the New Testament, and also the pages of ecclesiastical history, and not be entirely convinced that Christianity has never yet been fully developed as it might be expected would be done upon earth, in the character and conduct of the church. There surely must be an age and a state of her history, when this shall be done, and when she shall not only *be*, but shall *appear* to be, cast in the very mould of the inspired volume — when the Sermon on the Mount, the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and the more eminently devout parts of all the other epistles, shall not only be the law, but also the practice, of Christians, and the Bible and the church shall exactly agree — when every professor of religion shall be a living exhibition of faith, hope, love, in all their power and beauty — when, in short, the spiritual shall so far predominate over the carnal, the divine over the human, the heavenly over the earthly, and the eternal over the temporal, that the communion of the faithful shall appear like a bride adorned for her husband, and just ready for the celebration of the nuptial ceremonies. Practical Christianity will not then appear, as it now too often does, as a feeble exotic withering in an uncongenial clime, but as a plant of paradise, exhibiting something of its native beauty, and shedding, though not wasting, its fragrance even on this desert air. All the fruits of the Spirit will be seen in rich abundance and full maturity. The workmanship of the Holy Ghost will be manifested, not only in the outline of the renewed mind, but in all the minute and delicate touches of Christian character. The image of God will be impressed upon the outer and *visible* man, while the mind of Christ will fill the *inner* and hidden man of the heart. Such is to be the church of the latter day; when the wintry season shall pass off, and be followed by a scene which shall exhibit, combined in one, the appropriate beauties of each season, — all the energies of spring the glow of summer, and the luxuriance of autumn.

Union, love, and harmony shall then characterize the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God. The prayer of the divine Redeemer, that his people may be one, even as he and the Father are one, shall be answered — the exhortations of the apostle, to keep the unity of the spirit in the

bond of peace, shall be complied with — the object, so long lost, so ardently desired, so mistakenly sought after, shall be restored, and the divided church become one again. The din of controversy shall cease with the din of arms — the peace that shall prevail in the world shall be but an emblem of the tranquillity which pervades the church — and the pen of the polemic shall be laid up in the museum of the antiquarian, with the sword of war. The spirit of division will be healed, not by legal restraints or angry controversy; nor will an angel descend to give a sanatory virtue to the troubled waters of strife; but this disease will be cured by a copious effusion of the Spirit of God upon the hostile parties — by the diffusion of a larger degree of vital religion — by drawing men from human systems to the fountain of Scripture, there to purify their much abused vision from the scales of error and prejudice — by causing them not only to profess, but to feel, that love is the essence of Christianity, and all beside but “the earthly attire which she will throw off as she steps across the threshold of eternity, to enter the temple of God.” Illustrious era! How many hearts, saddened by the divisions of the visible church, are sighing for thine advent, and how many sons of peace are lifting up their aspirations to Him that ordereth the times and the seasons, saying, “Come quickly!” Thine it is to heal the matricidal wounds inflicted by her own children on the peace of Zion. Thine, not only to repress the bitter words, and still more bitter feelings, and to expel the envies and the jealousies occasioned by the barriers of sectarian zeal, but to remove the very barriers themselves, and bring into one fold, under one shepherd, that precious flock of Christ, which during the dark and cloudy day that has come upon us, has been scattered upon the mountains and upon every high hill. Thine it is to close the long reign of malice and hate, to which our earth has been subjected ever since the hour of the fall, and to give to it the nearest resemblance to heaven it ever can have below, in the universal dominion of love. Hasten, O Saviour, this thy brightest triumph! All creatures groan for thy coming, while thy church cries, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!”

But even this is not all that awaits the church on earth, for she is assured of *increase, triumph, and universal dominion*. She is not always to be shut up within her present narrow limits, a little band, scorned by pride, oppressed by

power; the circumference of the globe is to be the circle of her domain, and all nations are to be her subjects. The Lord shall arise upon thee, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted." "The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see and flow together, and thy heart shall fear, and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." A thousand such promises as these, though partially fulfilled by the incarnation of the Son of God, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world,—await their consummation in the latter day glory. Then shall God utterly abolish the idols of every land. "I have sworn by myself," says He. "the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return; that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." Thus the oath of God is pledged to the subversion of everything that opposeth itself to him. Paganism, that blood-stained, hydra-headed monster of impiety, cruelty, and lust, shall be slain to rise no more. Mohammedanism, that audacious lie, propagated by the scimitar, and kept up only by the means that established it in the earth, shall be exterminated—and the Koran be destroyed by the Bible, and the crescent disappear forever in the blaze of the Sun of Righteousness. Then shall the vail fall from the heart of the Jew, the blindness which hath happened unto Israel be done away, and the outcasts of Judea, still beloved for their fathers' sake, shall "come in with the fulness of the Gentiles." The man of sin shall be cut off; the mighty angel shall take the mill-stone, and dashing it into the sea, shall utter the shout, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen;" while the loud voice of much people shall reply, "Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." The sabbath of our world shall have arrived. The worship of Jehovah shall be universal. The Name which is above every name shall be heard on every plain, and echoed from every mountain. The Bible shall be in every hand, a house

of prayer in every village, and an altar for God in every habitation. The groans of creation shall be lost amidst the songs of salvation, and this vale of tears, even to its darkest nook and deepest recess, be irradiated with the sunshine of joy and praise. The throne of tyranny, cemented by blood, and occupied by oppression, shall be overturned, and the vine and fir tree overshadow the seat, and yield the fruit, of liberty, planted in its place. Slavery, that veriest type of selfishness, cruelty, and lawless power, shall be abolished, as one of the greatest crimes and direst curses of humanity. The Prince of Peace, whose throne is forever and ever, "shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn the art of war any more." Commerce shall be purified from its cupidity — legislation from its injustice — literature from its pride — and philosophy from its scepticism. The principles of Christianity shall permeate everything, and leaven the whole mass of society with the spirit of that kingdom, "which is righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." Then will be realized all the glowing descriptions contained in the chapters of Revelation, to which we have already alluded, and men, and angels, and God himself, rejoice over "the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

How many centuries shall roll before this blessed era of harmonized, sanctified humanity shall arrive — how much more of its history our world is to spend in sin and rebellion, and in groans and tears, it is not for any of us to say. Some imagine they hear the clocks of prophecy and providence both set in harmony to the divine decree, striking the eleventh hour. I am not so skilled in prophetic arithmetic, or mystic symbols; "it is not for *me* to know the times and the season; which the Father hath put in his own power;" and I am content with the promise and the hope, that the time is coming, when "the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ."

What vials of wrath have yet to be exhausted upon the world, or through what tribulations the church has yet to pass on her way to her millennial, and to her triumphal state, it is not for us even to conjecture. Perhaps there are conflicts for her to endure, of which she is now happily

ignorant, but for which, however severe, the grace that cometh from above will prepare her. Still, she *must be* victorious, for hers is the cause of God. Yes, Christians, the days roll on, when "the shout of the isles shall swell the thunder of the continent; when the Thames and the Danube, when the Tiber and the Rhine, shall call upon the Euphrates, the Ganges, and the Nile; and the loud concert shall be joined by the Hudson, the Mississippi, and the Amazon, singing with one heart and one voice, 'Alleluia! Salvation! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!'"

Followers of the Lamb, professors of Christianity, friends of your species — survey that wondrous scene, gaze upon that enchanting panorama, no mere picture of a fervid imagination, but sketched by the pencil of a divine hand, as of something which the resources and honor of God are pledged to render a glorious reality! Look at it, I say — a world converted from every error that blinds the judgment — every passion that corrupts the heart — every vice that degrades the character — and every curse that damns the soul — to everything that purifies, exalts, and saves its miserable inhabitants; and that by a power which subdues their understanding to truth — their habits to rectitude — and their hearts to happiness. If any dark ground be needed to draw out into more impressive and attractive beauty this age of the future — if anything more than the contemplation of it, apart and by itself, be requisite to fix your attention, kindle your enthusiasm, and engage your exertions — compare it with the world's past history, and its present aspect — "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. And as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things,

disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." This is the most awful, deeply shaded moral picture ever drawn by an inspired or uninspired pen, and it is affecting to consider that the apostle is not writing the annals of hell, and the biography of devils, but of our earth, and our species.

Such *was* this world in the apostle's days, as the history of even classic Greece and Rome clearly attests — as the disclosures of Herculaneum and Pompeii can corroborate. Such *is* the world in our days, as observation and report demonstrate. Such is *God's* world, such is *our* world — thus lying in the wicked one, clasped firmly in his arms, polluted by his embrace, and ruined by his arts. O Christians, can ye bear to look at it, rendered a thousand times more loathsome, hideous, and revolting, by the light of millennial glory, which from the preceding pages is poured over it to reveal more impressively its frightful apostasy from God! Sink not into despair. It is not always to be thus. In the midst of those deep sorrows which you feel, or ought to feel, over this dark and dreadful scene, turn to the other side of the contrast, and rejoice in prospect of the millennial glory. By whom is the reign of truth, holiness, and happiness, to be brought on? Who will be the direct and chief instruments of accomplishing this greatest of all happy revolutions — this wondrous spiritual renovation? Not the mighty ones of the earth — not monarchs, nobles, and statesmen — not warriors and heroes — not philosophers and scholars — not poets and artists — as such — but the ministers of religion, and the members of our churches — the men of faith, of prayer, and of zeal — the men who have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ — the men who are despised as enthusiasts, or hated as fanatics — yes, these are the men to whom the world will stand indebted for its restoration to God, to happiness, and immortality. What an inducement, and what an obligation to more intense devotedness, are here! To bring on this stupendous and auspicious change is your work — and O, what work ought it to be to accomplish such an end! See here the object, the result, and the reward, of your labor. You cannot labor in vain — not a moment of time — not a farthing of property — not a fragment of activity — not a prayer of faith, can be lost. Borrow inspiration to your zeal from the prospect of the latter day glory, which you are to be the means of

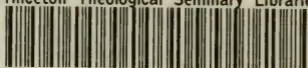
producing. Let the groans of an unregenerated world melt and move you to the most intense pity; and let the anticipated shouts of a redeemed one awaken all the energies of zeal and hope. WHAT IS WANTED — AND ALL THAT IS WANTED, UNDER GOD'S BLESSING, FOR THE WORLD'S CONVERSION TO CHRIST, IS — AN EARNEST MINISTRY, AND AN EARNEST CHURCH.

May they both and all awake to a deep sense of their duty, and a holy ambition to perform it, combined at the same time with a believing confidence in the truth of the Divine promise, and the all-sufficiency of the Holy Spirit.





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